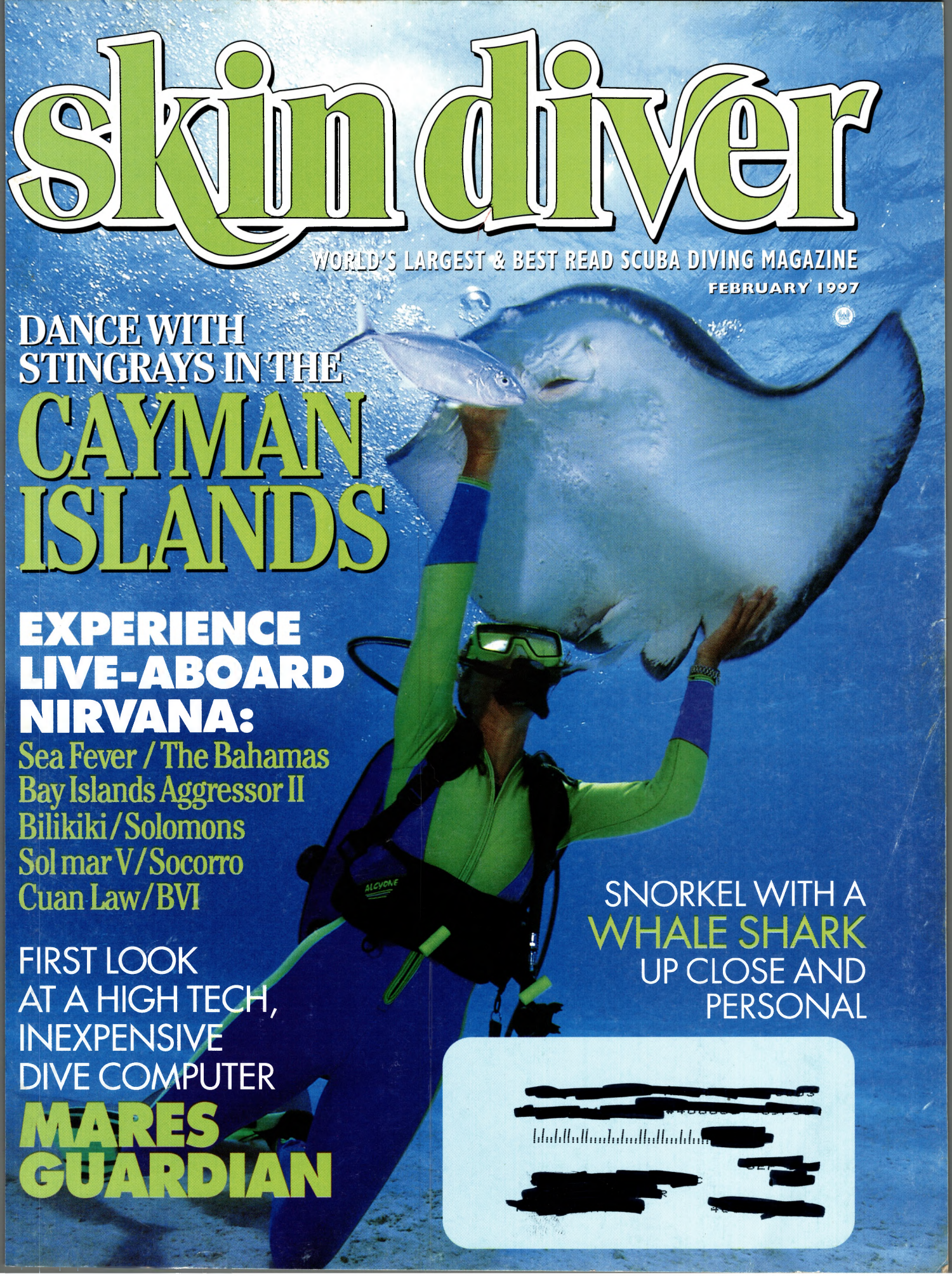
skin diver

WORLD'S LARGEST & BEST READ SCUBA DIVING MAGAZINE
FEBRUARY 1997



DANCE WITH STINGRAYS IN THE

CAYMAN ISLANDS

EXPERIENCE LIVE-ABOARD NIRVANA:

Sea Fever / The Bahamas
Bay Islands Aggressor II
Bilikiki / Solomons
Sol mar V / Socorro
Cuan Law / BVI

FIRST LOOK AT A HIGH TECH, INEXPENSIVE DIVE COMPUTER

MARES GUARDIAN

SNORKEL WITH A WHALE SHARK UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

SCUBAPRO®
Deep Down,
You Want
the Best.
A Revolutionary Concept in Thermal Comfort
The Hi-Tech concept—comfort, interchangeability, and minimization of water exchange—is the distinctive feature of our premier wetsuit line.

LayerZ

BY SCUBAPRO

The ultimate, modular, thermal protection system allows you to customize a complete outfit to meet your diving needs. Flex panels, Titanium insulation, and minimal water exchange, combine to keep you warmer than you ever thought possible. All jackets and steamers are interchangeable, providing a versatile system for any diving environment. Creating your LayerZ system is...

...as easy as 1, 2, 3!

1. Unisex Shorty

The ultimate bathing suit for divers, this tank style undergarment has many uses. Only 1.5mm thick, it may be worn as an extra layer under any suit, and slips on easily with no fasteners to add bulk. It can also be worn by itself in the tropics for thermal and ultra-violet protection.

2. Hi-Tech Steamers

Steamers form the base of LayerZ, SCUBAPRO's ultimate, completely integrated thermal protection system. All Steamers include Titanium insulation, and skin to skin seals, allowing you to wear a thinner, more flexible system than is possible with conventional designs.

3. Hi-Tech Jackets

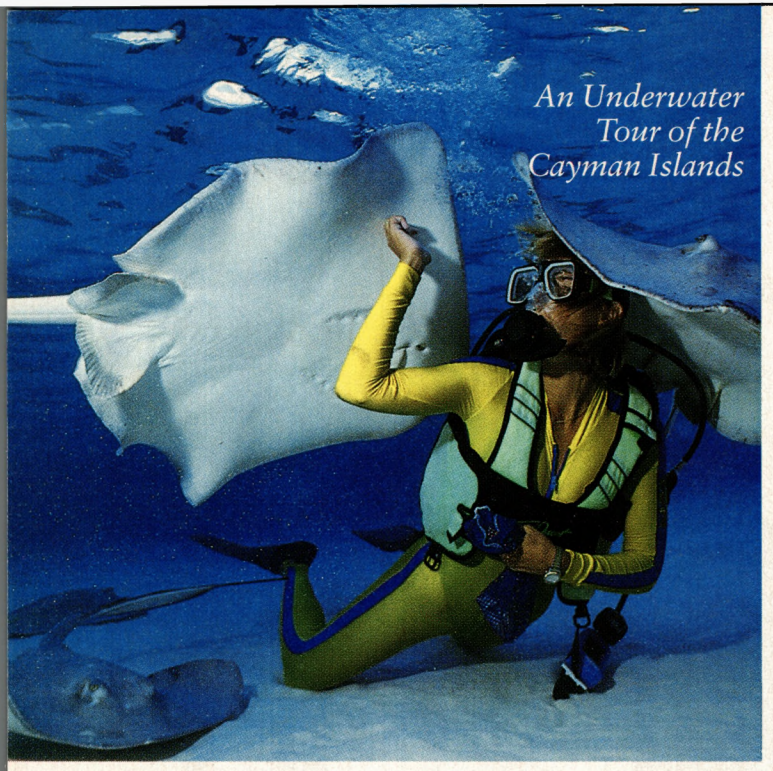
All LayerZ Hi-Tech Jackets are sleeveless to maintain maximum mobility yet provide another layer of warmth around the torso. Legs are bicycle length for more warmth and protection.

Call your local SCUBAPRO dealer today to find your personal Thermal Protection Factor (TPF®).

SCUBAPRO

For a preview of our complete line of SCUBAPRO diving equipment, new interractive CD, and the location of a dive center near you please visit our website at http://www.jwa.com or call 1-800-GO SCUBA. In Canada, 905-634-0023.

http://www.jwa.com



The BVI's Nanny Cay Resort

Bay Islands Aggressor III

About the cover: *Sue Steere caresses the velvety underside of a Southern Stingray; one of the residents of Grand Cayman's Stingray City. This popular marine life attraction has a ten year history of providing divers and snorkelers with memorable encounters. Read more about the celebration of its tenth anniversary in an Underwater Tour of the Cayman Islands on page 91. Photo/Walt Stearns.*

skin diver

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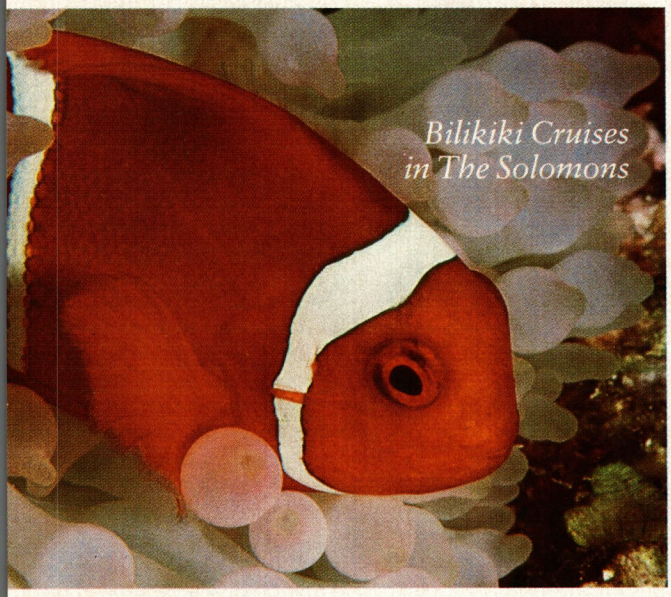

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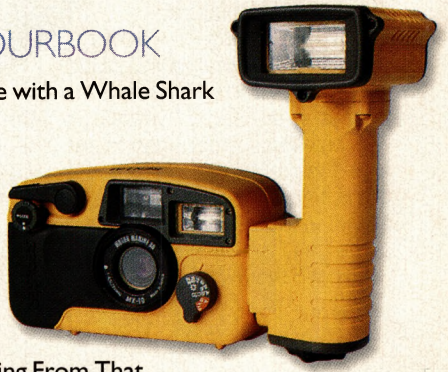

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The Platinum Pro Foundation

In this issue, we list the recipients of the most prestigious and equitable award in the diving world. Called the SSI Platinum Pro 5000, it has been given to fewer than 1,000 divers.

This award is prestigious because it is exclusive. Most divers will never even begin to amass the award's simple, basic requirements: At least 5,000 dives or at least 2,500 dives *and* a significant contribution (scientific, developmental or pioneering) to the world of diving.

The award is equitable because the requirements listed above are the only requirements. You'll find the names of your favorite divemasters (it takes eight to ten years of daily diving at a resort to get enough "mileage") right alongside familiar and famous diving names.

This award could be considered a "Who's Who" in the scuba world, since a lifetime commitment to diving is usually necessary to accumulate the number of dives that earn you the ultimate C-card, the Platinum Pro 5000.

This recognition award, now celebrating its fifth anniversary, is an industry standard. The words "Platinum Pro" confer a status that is earned, not artificially manufactured.

The Platinum Pro 5000 Award was the brainchild of Bob Clark, who started Scuba Schools International (SSI) 27 years ago. After it was created, Clark began to see a larger potential in the group of diving professionals who had received it. One of the natural by-products of diving for most of us is that we become, in the words of Jean-Michel Cousteau, "Ambassadors of the Sea." Ambassadors, by their nature, patiently explain and re-explain the mysteries found underwater and how easily and safely we can explore them with either snorkel or scuba.

Bob Clark reasoned there was an untapped potential in the Platinum Pros and their dedication to diving. So, he created the Platinum Pro Foundation. Launched last month, this nonprofit group, set up completely independent of SSI, seeks to harness the resources of the Platinum Pro 5000 recipients and the award's corporate sponsors. There is only one goal: Educate the young (through the school systems and social activities) about both the excitement and mystery of the underwater world and provide an ongoing, level-headed message on the marine environment. Who better to act as spokespersons than the Platinum Pros?

In scope, however, the Platinum Pro Foundation has far more ambitious goals than just being a speaker's bureau for diving (albeit the largest such group in the world). It aims to use its resources to educate young people via a diverse list of communication points, from brochures to videos to direct speaker contact. And it will work. Among the SKIN DIVER staff and contributing editors alone we number some 14 Platinum Pros. Our consensus (and that of most divers), is to support the project 100 percent.

The foundation will not ask for individual memberships or consumer support, so there is no solicitation message here. It is a supremely logical tie-in between a diverse, worldwide group of diving professionals and an idea whose merit is without question. The education of our youth on the wonders of the underwater world will yield fantastic benefits. The Platinum Pros earned their distinctive and unique awards in the past and children, of course, are our future. Many thanks to Bob Clark and the Platinum Pros for finding a way to link the past with the future.

Bill Gleason

BILL GLEASON
PUBLISHER & EDITOR

Brilliant Performers by

SLR-AF HOUSINGS

Choose the housing that affords full underwater use of your favorite 35mm camera, be it Nikon, Canon, Minolta or Pentax. There is not another housing at any price that will produce better photographic results or provide greater security underwater than an Ikelite SLR housing.

MINI-C HANDLE MOUNT

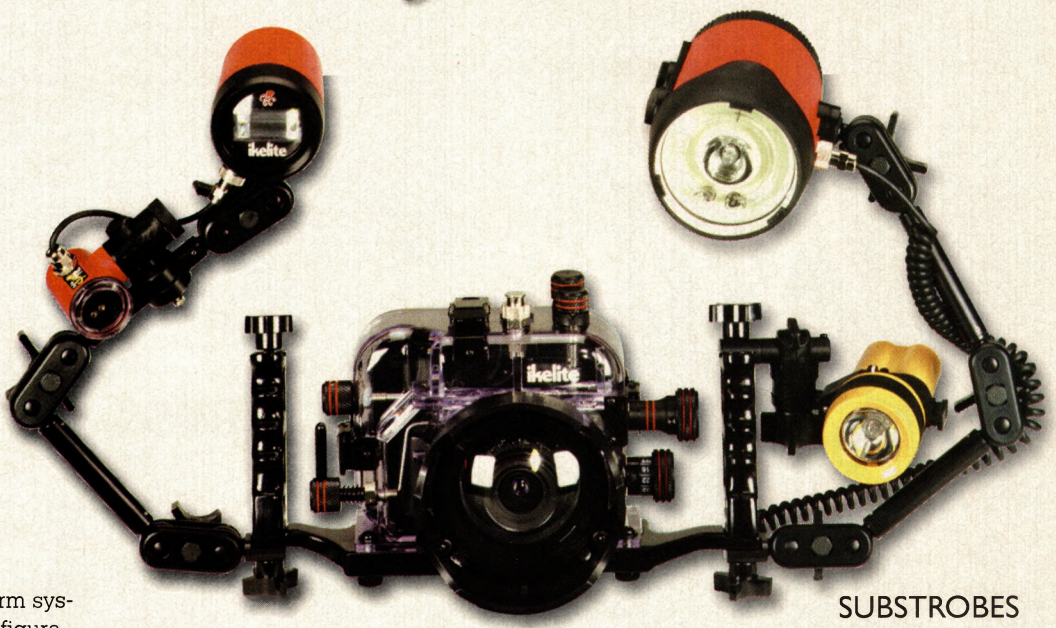
Use the Mini C-Lite as a modeling light or diving light mounted to the Ikelite SLR Housing

QUICK GRIP ARMS

Ikelite's articulating ball-socket arm system offers a multitude of arm configurations including a quick-release handle. Knuckle design provides better holding power than other systems.

TTL SLAVE

Ikelite's TTL Slave Sensor turns any Ikelite Substrobe into a true TTL slave, operates up to 50 feet, plus eliminates the need for a second cumbersome sync cord.



SUBSTROBES

Designed and built in the USA for both the professional and amateur photographer, Ikelite offers 5 models of underwater strobes to meet different needs and budgets. The Substrobe 50 is the brightest and fastest recycling strobe in its class. The Substrobe 100A offers variable output and angle of coverage. The 200 and 400 are the choice of pros the world over. All Ikelite Substrobes are covered by a two year limited warranty supported by a proven commitment to service unmatched in the industry worldwide.

Ikelite

For more information contact your local Dive Shop or visit us on the web at

www.ikelite.com

PCa LITE

Extremely bright for its small size, (2.5" x 4") the PCa is ideally suited as a compact backup light. Powered by six AA batteries, it produces an incredibly intense beam.

AQUASHOT II

The Aquashot II is so simple and inexpensive you won't believe the beautiful results it can produce. Simply load the Aquashot II with a 35mm single-use camera and all you have to do is point and shoot. Oh yes, you do have to turn on the flash and advance the film, but that is as technical as it gets.

AQUASNAP CAMERA

No need to worry where to buy cameras for the Aquashot II housing. Ikelite now offers a single-use-camera that can be used above water or in the housing. The AquaSnap camera features built-in flash and 27-exposure film.

PC LITE

Pocket C-Lite, the first of a new generation.

The PC Lites utilize a totally new opening and sealing system. The PC's unique snap-ring permits the complete front assembly to be easily removed for quick access to batteries and lamp. This new all-purpose PC Lite conveniently stores in your BCD pocket. Carry the compact PC Lite on every dive to illuminate objects night or day. Rotating switch provides quick on/off control.

The PC Lites feature new high intensity halogen lamps producing an incredibly bright penetrating spot beam.

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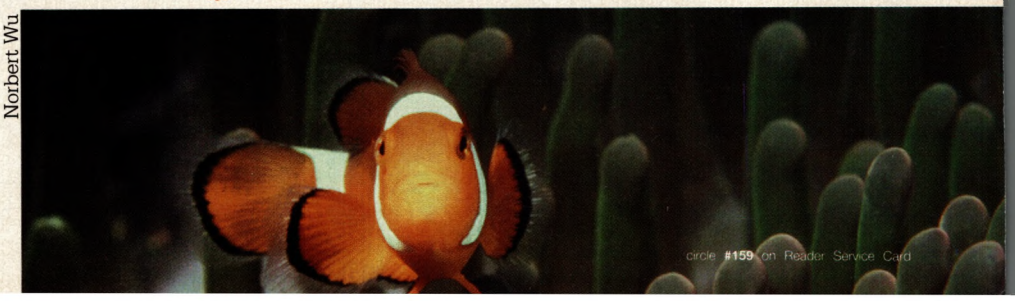

Norbert Wu

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Stuart Cove's New DPV Dive Sensation—

Wall Flying

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN FRINK

It had been 16 years since I had gone scuba diving without an underwater camera in my hand. Given the tremendous photo opportunities found off the southwestern coast of New Providence Island in The Bahamas, I couldn't imagine I'd be coaxed into diving sans camera. But, during a recent visit to Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean I heard the excitement in the voices of divers as they came off the boats after trying an exciting new adventure. I decided I'd have to try Wall Flying just to find out what all the buzz was about.

The Concept: Wall Flying is a unique dive program created by Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean and involving Diver Propulsion Vehicles (DPVs), also called U/W scooters. Dive scooters have been around longer than single hose regulators. It is unusual to see a scooter on a dive boat, not because it is not a fun way to dive, but because they are reasonably expensive and a hassle to travel with. Recognizing the exhilaration and fascination scooters could bring to a dive, Stuart Cove addressed all the problems and benefits of scooter diving with his Wall Flying Adventure.

Much of the diving off New Providence is ideally suited to DPV use, especially the spectacular walls beginning as shallow as 40 feet. The deep ocean abyss known as the **Tongue of the Ocean** lies just offshore, providing miles of spectacular drop-offs decorated with Purple Tube Sponges, deep water gorgonians and Black Coral. Sharks are prolific along certain areas of the wall, especially around places such as Shark Arena and Shark Wall, where Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean has created one of the world's premier shark dives.

Stuart decided that, because there's so much great wall diving, dive scooters would be the perfect vehicles to enhance exploration. Also, they would make it fun and effortless. Now the challenge was to make the scooters available to his clientele and design a program specifically tailored to the increased range and mobility inherent in scooter diving.

The Scooter: Once committed to the concept of Wall Flying, Stuart had to find the right DPV. He tested several scooters before choosing the Apollo DPV. (Note: The Apollo DPV is distributed in the United States by Dacor.) He based his decision on the durability of the unit, its ease of battery charging and replacement, and that the Apollo DPV is lightweight (easy to transport on the dive boat), maneuverable and fast. Fourteen Apollo DPVs were purchased to accommodate a maximum of 12 guests and two dive guides on each Wall Flying Adventure.

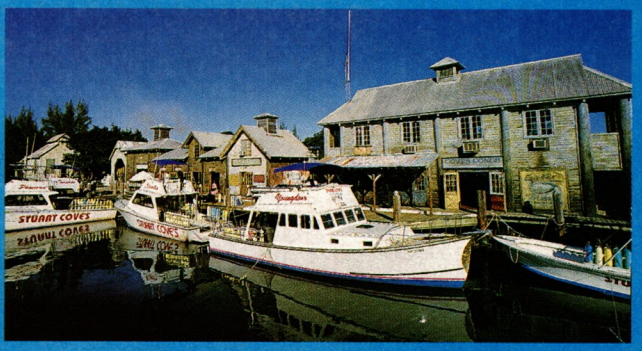
The Program: The Wall Flying divers are first instructed on the operation and safety considerations of using a DPV. There is just one on/off switch on the Apollo, so operation is quite simple, but there is a best way to channel the prop wash away from

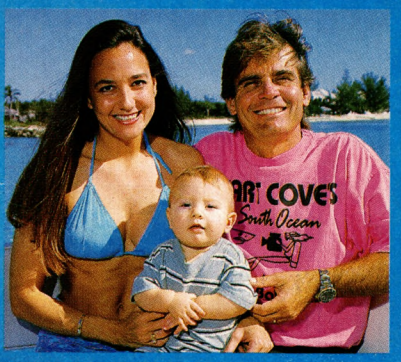
(Continued on Page 128)

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

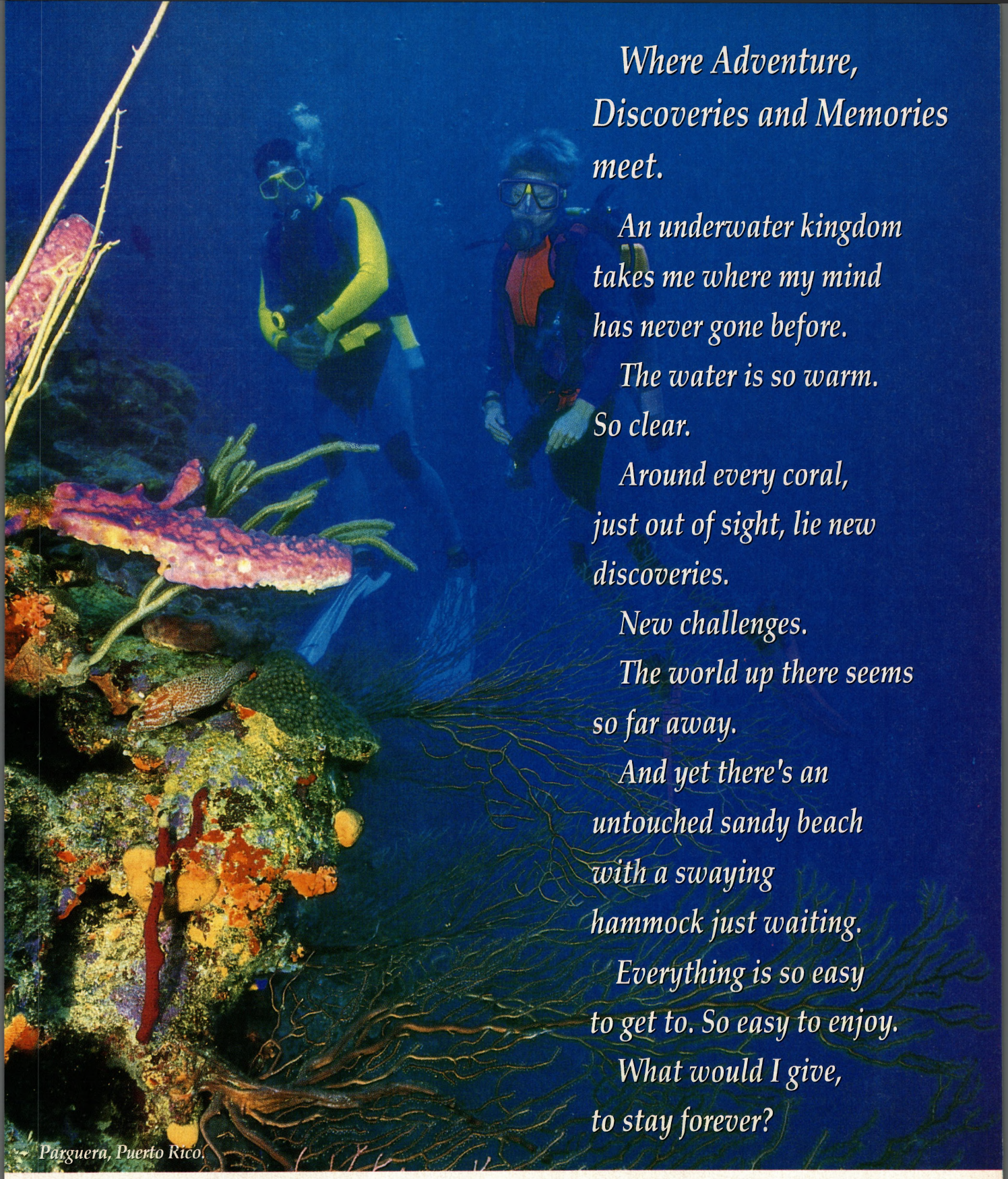
Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean is best known for:

- Wall Flying
- Shark dives
- Shallow shipwrecks
- Shallow reefs
- Wall dives





Above: Stuart Cove's impressive dockside presence of ready to go dive boats. Right: Michelle and Stuart Cove with their young son, Travis. Background: Apollo Diver Propulsion Vehicles (DPVs) are the scooters of choice for Stuart Cove's latest innovation—Wall Flying.



Where Adventure, Discoveries and Memories meet.

An underwater kingdom takes me where my mind has never gone before.

The water is so warm. So clear.

Around every coral, just out of sight, lie new discoveries.

New challenges.

The world up there seems so far away.

And yet there's an untouched sandy beach with a swaying hammock just waiting.

Everything is so easy to get to. So easy to enjoy.

What would I give, to stay forever?

Parguera, Puerto Rico.

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For information on Groups & Conventions in Puerto Rico, please contact: **1-800-875-4765**

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Mares Guardian

A DO-EVERYTHING COMPUTER NOVICE DIVERS WILL LOVE

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

During a recent staff meeting, the question, "What is a dive computer's most important feature?" was posed to SDM editors. Our unanimous answer, spoken simultaneously, was, "It has to be easy to use."

The Mares Guardian is that but it's also a whole lot more. This is a computer both novice and experienced divers will love. And, it will also appeal to both computer illiterates and sophisticates because it has all the basic features divers have come to expect along with several that are far above and beyond the norm.

Can one computer really be everything to everyone? Judge for yourself, the list of the Guardian's features includes: visual and audio alarms; air and water temperatures; display lighting; dive simulation; a logbook of the last 30 dives; a dive profile memory of the last 10 dives; a dive history; automatic atmospheric and water temperature/-salinity calibration; PC/Windows interface; and, unique to the Guardian, Underwater Behavior Analysis.

The Guardian can be used for both no decompression and decompression dives to 490 feet; to altitudes of more than 7,800 feet; in temperatures as low as 14°F and as high as 122°F. It has variable ascent rates that differ from 33 to 60 feet per minute, according to depth, and are expressed as a percentage of the allowable rate. Any time its user makes a no decompression dive below 33 feet, the Guardian automatically displays a three minute safety stop at 15 feet.

Additionally, the Guardian user can change the measurements displayed to meters or feet and degrees Celsius or Fahrenheit (and vice versa).

The Guardian's decompression model is a modified Haldane algorithm, which monitors nine theoretical tissues with half-times ranging from 2.5 to 480 minutes.

One would expect a computer with all of these features to be huge but the Guardian has an ergonomically designed technopolymer housing that measures only 3½ inches wide (button to button), 3 inches tall and 1⅞ inches thick (at the widest part). It's lightweight, too, weighing just a little more than nine ounces. It is available as a wrist or hose mount unit.

The Mares Guardian is a sophisticated yet easy to use dive computer. It comes with a replaceable scratch guard covering the face.

FOR COMPUTER ILLITERATES

If you know nothing about computers, you'll find using the Guardian a breeze. Just strap it on and jump into the water. Upon submersion, the Guardian turns itself on. To save battery power, it also turns itself off ten minutes after a dive. The Guardian is powered by three, user replaceable AAA alkaline batteries, which should last about 100 hours when the backlighting is used a couple times per dive or about 25 hours if the backlighting is used continuously.

To plan your next dive, use the three yellow function keys. The one on the left lets you choose the various functions, among them Plan. When that word appears on the lower right side of the screen, press the top right button to scroll through the no decompression limits for depths from 40 to 160 feet in 10 foot increments. Accessing the myriad other functions is equally simple.

FOR COMPUTER SOPHISTICATES

If you're a computer sophisticate or an experienced diver you'll find the Guardian offers a multitude of special features. It lets you choose among four different programs for altitude dives. These programs can also be used at sealevel to make diving more conservative (especially useful for diving in cold water, deep dives or multi-day repetitive dives). If you get into decompression either accidentally or on purpose, the Guardian will guide you through it, displaying ceilings, stop depths and alerting you with audio and visual alarms if you make a mistake along the way.

The Guardian keeps track of any errors made during a dive with its unique Underwater Behavior Analysis (U.B.A.). Although the exact errors made are stored in the logbook for each dive and will appear in downloaded logbook data, on the Guardian screen they

(Continued on Page 126)

AQUATICA®

Distributed by Nikon Inc.

"The Professional's Choice"

Nikon N90s with 16mm f2.8 lens, 1/30 second at f-5.6, SB104 at 1/4 power

Aquatica 90: Professional

THE AQUATICA 90 IS ENGINEERED TO DELIVER THE BEST IMAGING CAPABILITIES UNDER THE ROUGHEST CONDITIONS

Only the Aquatica 90 delivers all these features:

- compact, ergonomic design for easy handling and traveling
- rugged construction for dependability in harsh conditions
- precision controls access all major camera features
- innovative optical viewfinder that allows full image viewing
- electro-mechanical shutter release w/adjustable control
- bayonet ports for positive mounting and fast changing
- three model options
  - -standard housing
  - -mechanical back
  - -computer back

Mechanical Back

Mechanical back with push-button control of MF-26 Multi-function Back.

Computer Back

Computer back with LCD display and three user programmed menus.

Aquatica Sport

THE ECONOMICAL AQUATICA FOR HASSLE FREE UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY WITH YOUR NIKON CAMERA

- compact easy handling with a slide out camera saddle
- viewfinder eyepiece for easy composition
- point & shoot simplicity with auto focus & auto exposure
- manual exposure with aperture control for creative options
- available as photo/video combination unit
- the most economical Aquatica SLR package
- accommodates 10 different Nikon camera models

ACCOMMODATES NIKON:

N90,	F90,
N90s,	F90X,
N70,	F70,
N50,	F50,
N4004s,	F-401,
N4004,	F-401s,
N5005,	F-401x,
N6006,	F601,
N8008s,	F601s,
N8008,	F801

Simplicity is the key to the Aquatica Sport. Fast and accurate. Nikon autofocus will ensure sharp photos, while the aperture control is all you need for creative imaging. You can use program auto, aperture priority auto, or manual exposure as needed. Interchangeable flat and dome ports accommodate the use of most lenses for different photographic needs.

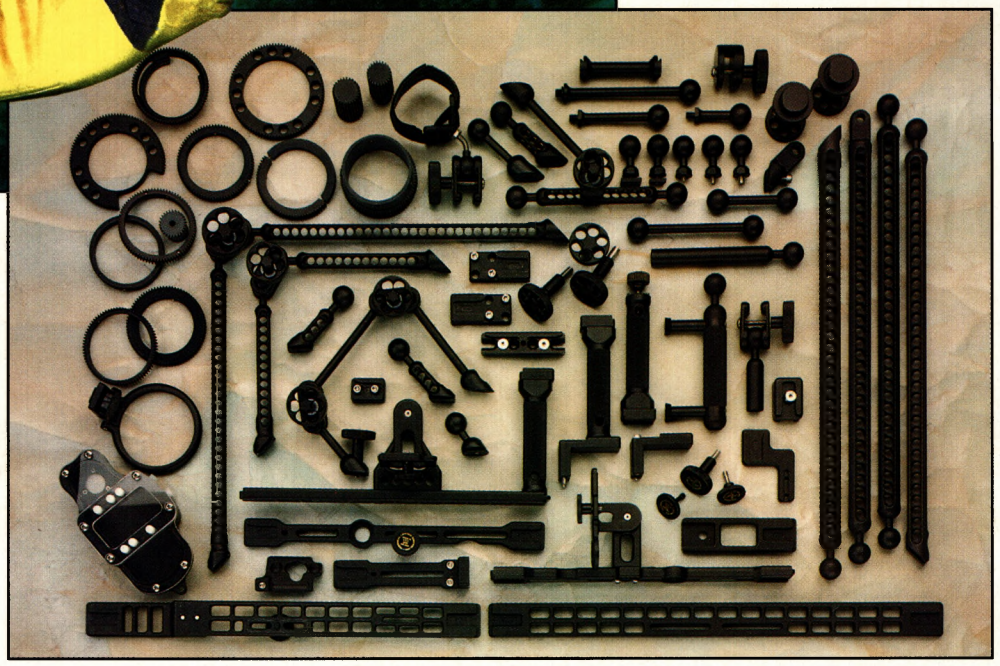
Aqualens

A UNIQUE TOOL FOR EXPANDING THE UNDERWATER IMAGING CAPABILITIES OF YOUR NIKONOS CAMERA

- more wide angle options available to allow you to get closer and to see more
  - -16mm fisheye w/180° angle of view
  - -18mm rectilinear w/102° angle of view
- use same lenses on your topside Nikon cameras
- optional focus and aperture gears available
- optical viewfinder with parallax correction

The Aqualens offers a unique opportunity to expand the imaging capability of a Nikonos. With manual focus and aperture controls, you can now use any wide angle Nikkor lens underwater, for such creative shots as this clownfish and anemone reef scene, made with the 16mm/2.8 Fisheye Nikkor. Other popular lenses used with the Aqualens include the 18mm/2.8 and 20mm/2.8 Nikkor.

TECHNICAL LIGHTING CONTROL



Ports & Gears

FLAT PORTS: Used for macro & normal lens photography
DOME PORTS: used for wide angle photography

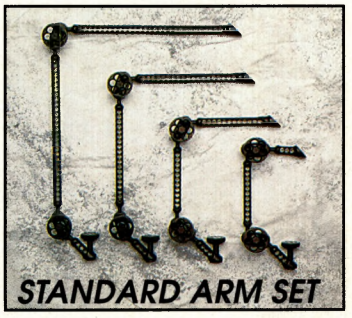
EXTENSION RINGS AND GEARS adapt different lenses with proper optical alignment:

- MACRO EXTENSIONS for 105mm & 200mm micro Nikkor lenses
- WIDE ANGLE EXTENSIONS for 15mm & 18mm Nikkor lenses

Standard Arm Set

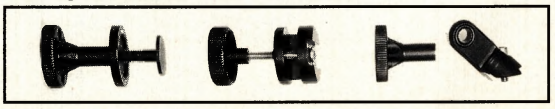
- solid aluminum construction for strong dependable performance
- light weight for traveling
- anodized for durability
- teflon coated for precision movements & control
- for customized use, different length arm sections, handles, clamps, ball heads & additional joints and trays are available

STEM ARM

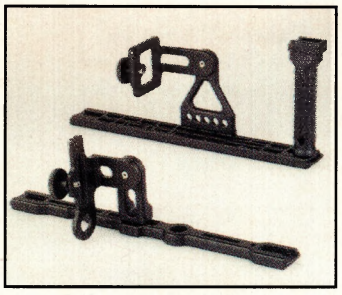


STANDARD ARM SET

FLASH HEAD ADAPTERS



More Accessories

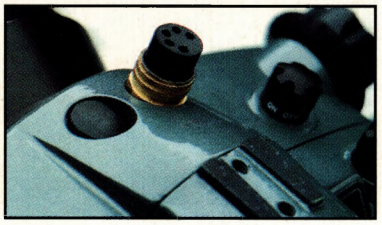


Nikonos V and Nikonos Flip Trays

When you have your strobes positioned just as you like, and you decide to change the composition from horizontal to vertical, there is no need to turn the entire rig and reposition your strobes if you are using an Aquatica Flip Tray. Simply push a button on the back to unlock the tray and turn it 90 degrees to shoot vertically. The camera will click into position securely until you lock it again to return it to its horizontal position.

Wet TTL Connectors

Interchange a speedlight with several cameras underwater with five wire TTL cords and connectors. Full TTL communication is retained in either a bulkhead connector for any Aquatica TTL Housing, or with adapters for Nikonos cameras and strobe cords. Available in single or double Wet TTL configurations.



Nikonos RS and SB -105 Speedlight in vertical position on the Aquatica Flip Tray.

Nikonos Shootout and Nikon School of Underwater Photography

NIKONOS SHOOTOUTS

Bonaire June 21-28, 1997
Cayman Brac July 12-19, 1997
Key Largo August 10-17, 1997
Curacao September 20-27, 1997

NIKON SCHOOL OF UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

Basic Schools

June 14-21, 1997 - Key Largo with Stephen Frink

July 19-26, 1997 - Nassau, Bahamas with Bill Harrigan

Advanced Schools

May 10-17, 1997 - Curacao, N.A. with Stephen Frink

August 16-23, 1997 - Little Cayman, BWI with Rick Frehsee

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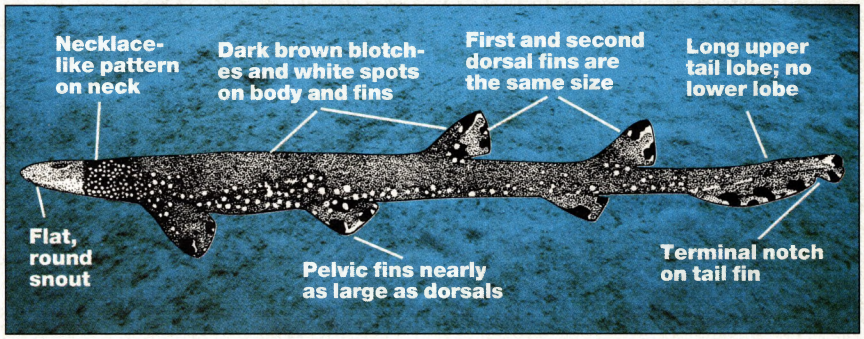
The Varied Carpetshark

(Parascyllium variolatum)

BY BONNIE J. CARDONE
PHOTO BY RUDIE KUITER



The Varied Carpetshark, also called the Necklace Carpetshark, has markings that look like a pearl necklace or collar. This shark is found only in Australia waters.

If you want to see a Varied Carpetshark, also known as the Necklace Carpetshark, you will have to arrange a diving trip off western or southern Australia. This very uncommonly encountered fish is only found in that area and little is known about it. If you do see *Parascyllium variolatum*, however, you are unlikely to confuse it with any other shark. Long and slender, its most distinctive feature is its coloring. According to the *FAO Species Catalogue: Sharks of the World*, "The bold, beautiful colour pattern...is unmistakable: a unique, broad, dark, white-spotted collar around the gills, striking black marks on all fins, dark [brown] blotches and white spots on body...." The shark's "collar" is "...densely spotted with white like a necklace of pearls."

The Varied Carpetshark has a narrow, slightly flattened head with a rounded snout. The fifth gill slit overlaps the fourth. The nostrils have short, pointed barbels. The long tail has a terminal notch on the upper lobe; there is no lower lobe. The two dorsal fins and the pelvic fins are the same size, the anal fin is somewhat smaller. The pectoral fins are "thick, muscular and rather small." (*FAO Species Catalogue.*)

The Varied Carpetshark belongs to the order Orectolobiformes—the Carpetsharks—which counts Whale Sharks, Blind Sharks, Wobbegongs, Bamboo Sharks, Zebra Sharks and Nurse Sharks among its members. Altogether, the order has 7 families, 13 genera and 31 species, most of which are sluggish bottom dwellers—the pelagic Whale Shark is the lone exception. The Varied Carpetshark's family, Parascyllidae, contains two genera: *Cirrhoscyllium*, which has three species and *Parascyllium*, which has four. The Varied Carpetshark's closest relatives include *P. collare* (the Collared Carpetshark), *P. ferrugineum* (the Rusty Carpetshark) and *P. multimaculatum* (the Tasmanian Carpetshark). All are found only off Australia.

In some books Carpetsharks are called Catsharks, presumably because their eyes resemble those of cats.

Since other species of its genus eat mollusks and crustaceans, the diet of the Varied Carpetshark most probably consists of shellfish as well. Also, most of these sharks are nocturnal.

The Varied Carpetshark is found to depths of about 500 feet and is believed to be an egglayer. A small shark, it is thought to grow to lengths of about three feet. Because it is small and nonaggressive it is considered harmless.

Sentry's Scuba and Watersport Expo

Sentry Pool and Scuba will be sponsoring a watersport expo on **February 2**, at Black Hawk College, 6600 34th Avenue, Moline, Illinois. There will be displays from scuba and watersport manufacturers as well as travel and resort agencies. Nondivers will be able to participate in a Discover Scuba session and there will be valuable door prizes and raffles. All proceeds will be donated to Divers Alert Network. The hours will be 10:00 am to 5:00 pm.

For information, call Sentry Pool and Scuba at (309) 797-9721 or fax (309) 797-5748.

1997 CME Conference

Duke University School of Medicine of Durham, North Carolina, will join St. George's University School of Medicine of Grenada, West Indies, for a CME conference **February 7 to 11**. The conference will be held at St. George's new campus at True Blue. Among the several noted speakers will be Richard Moon, M.D., medical director of Divers Alert Network and F.G. Hall Hyperbaric Center. He will lead a panel on hyperbaric medicine. Other topics will include hypertension, infectious diseases and sleep disorders. CME credits will be granted through Duke University.

For information, contact the Office of Public Affairs at (516) 665-8500 or fax (516) 666-7609.

Antelope Desert Divers Banquet

The 27th annual Antelope Desert Divers Awards Banquet will be held **February 15** at the Desert Inn in Lancaster, CA. The featured speaker is Bonnie J. Cardone, executive editor of SKIN DIVER Magazine. She will give an exciting and humorous slide presentation about being shipwrecked on a dive vacation entitled "Castaway at Apo."

For more information or tickets, please contact Bill Creighton at (805) 944-3652.

Wreks & Treks '97

The Boston Diving Show will present the PDIC Celebrity Series Seminars, Wreks and Treks '97, on **February 15**, at the Holiday Inn and Resort in Marlboro, Massachusetts. The show will feature Tom Mount of IANTD (International Association of Nitrox and Technical Divers), Richard Nordstrom of Divecomm, Inc., Don Whitehead and Fred Calhoun of PDIC. Tom Mount will be presented with the Paul Revere Spike Award of the Underwater Club of Boston, a richly mounted, authentic copper spike from the shipwreck USF *New Hampshire*. The show will be open from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Tickets will be $10 at the door or may be purchased in advance by writing Fred Calhoun, Apple Ridge 2-6, Maynard, Massachusetts 01754. Make checks payable to "Underwater."

Ocean Wreck Divers' Flea Market

The Ocean Wreck Divers of Seaside Heights, New Jersey, will hold its eight annual Scuba Flea Market **February 16**. The event will be held at Toms River High School East from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Proceeds are used, in part, to support DAN, Clean Ocean Action, The Littoral Society and the New Jersey Artificial Reef Fund, among others.

For more information, call (908) 477-2532 or (908) 364-1745.

Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival

The Ford Seahorses Scuba Diving Club will sponsor the 20th annual Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival **February 22**, at the Ford Motor Company World Headquarters Auditorium in Dearborn, Michigan. Activities will include an afternoon and evening film festival, saltwater programs, seminars, diver's forum and a large exhibit of museum, marine artist and private artifact collections.

For information, call the Ford Seahorses Voicemail Hotline at (313) 769-2458 or visit on the Internet at www.webcom.com/cid/fsh/fsh.home.html.

St. Petersburg Shell Club 50th Annual Shell Show

The St. Petersburg Shell Club will hold its 50th annual shell show **February 28 through March 2** at the Treasure Island Community Center, St. Petersburg, Florida. The show includes exhibits of marine and freshwater shells from around the world. There will be ample opportunities for swapping or purchasing a wide variety of shells. Prize ribbons and rosettes will be awarded in scientific, educational, shell craft and photography categories.

For more information, write to P.O. Box 49191, St. Petersburg, FL 33743; (813) 381-7932.

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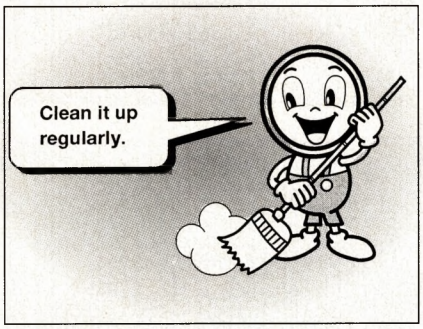
Dive Notes

SEA & SEA PUBLISHES FREE O-RING MANUAL: The O-ring is the single most important component of any underwater photo system. It is what keeps the water out. To help consumers protect their valued equipment, Sea & Sea has published a 16 page booklet called *O-ring Maintenance Manual: A Guide to Proper O-ring Maintenance for Those Who Enjoy Underwater Photography*.



The *O-ring Maintenance Manual* is the first of its kind. It is written in simple, clear and concise language for the novice, with information even the most experienced underwater photographer may not know, and is illustrated throughout. It starts with an explanation of what an O-ring is and how it functions, then moves on to detail how to properly remove it from its groove, clean it, lubricate it, replace it to its groove and even how to store it to extend its life.

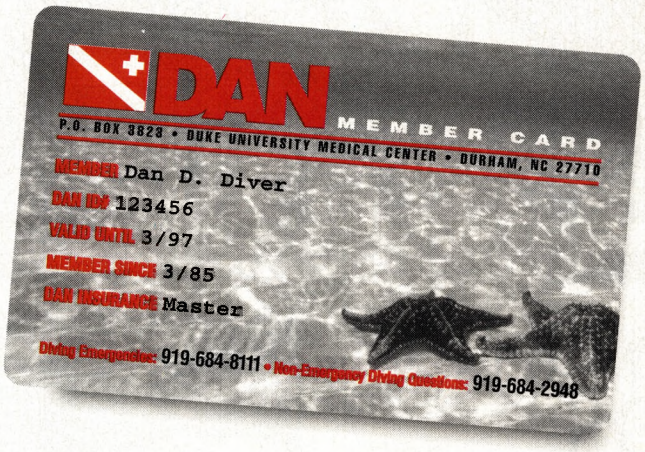
Narrating the manual is O-ring Boy, an expressive and enthusiastic cartoon character who smiles, frowns, gets angry, stern and tired and is a most endearing and effective instructor.

This innovative, friendly approach to consumer education is intended to dramatically reduce the incidence of consumer caused floodings, which result in costly repairs. It is another aspect of Sea & Sea's continuing commitment to providing consumers with the information they need to realize a consistently rewarding photographic experience.

The *O-ring Maintenance Manual* will be included with some Sea & Sea products in the near future. It is available now to everyone. You don't have to be a Sea & Sea owner. You don't have to purchase anything. Just visit your authorized Sea & Sea dealer and ask for one.

For the name of a dealer nearest you, contact Sea & Sea Underwater Photography USA at 2105 Camino Vida Roble, Suite L, Carlsbad, California 92009 or call (619) 929-1909, fax (619) 929-0098.

No One Does as Much for Divers.



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Pro Dive's ROS Program

BECOME A RESORT DIVE INSTRUCTOR AND LIVE YOUR DREAMS IN A TROPICAL SETTING

BY SHIRLEY VANDERBILT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BILL HARRIGAN

Top left: Course director Dave Lawler leads an oxygen administration training session on the bow of the* Pro Diver II. *Top right: A student explores the* Jim Atria *during a multi-level training dive. Above: A Pro Dive staff instructor supervises an ROS student teaching a Discover Scuba course.

The soft glow of sunsets, gently swaying palms and the rich, colorful reefs of the tropics are enough to make any avid scuba diver dream of a job as a resort dive instructor. In fact, many of today's instructor candidates have pursued dive career training with just that goal in mind. And, while this vocation has its perks, the reality is there's more involved here than a vacation with pay. There are many skills required of the '90s style resort instructor/divemaster, from compressor operation to human relations to dive accident management. Diving and instructional skills are only the beginning. With that in mind, Pro Dive has developed the industry's most comprehensive resort training program, the only school offering PADI's Resort Operations Specialist certification. Registered with the trademark name ROS in 1991, this two week, copyrighted course has actually been a part of Pro Dive's career curriculum for more than seven years, continually fine tuned to keep up with the progressive changes of the industry.

Pro Dive's distinguished reputation as a training school has led to many awards and honors, including designation as PADI's first Career Development Center. In the heart of south Florida's famous, oceanfront Bahia Mar Yachting Resort in Ft. Lauderdale, Pro Dive's facilities include multiple classrooms, a retail store, three Olympic sized training pools, the 60 foot glassbottom boat *Pro Diver II* and all of the luxuries of the resort, including Ft. Lauderdale's renowned beach across the street. Even students choosing to stay in adjacent motels will find everything they need within walking distance and Ft. Lauderdale's international airport is just 10 minutes away.

Pro Dive provides students with a true resort atmosphere, actual hands-on experience in working with vacationing divers and a supportive, structured environment designed to inspire students to reach their highest potential. With a student/instructor ratio of 6:1, Pro Dive's ROS program utilizes the special talents of a 12 member instructional staff to cover 10 major components. Students not only earn the ROS certification but also six instructor specialties.

Dive boat operations (PADI Boat Diving Specialty): As a major part of their practical experience, ROS students are involved daily in the planning and execution of recreational dive trips aboard the *Pro Diver II*. Throughout the two weeks of training, students rotate duties as pilot, divemaster and first mate, learn-

ing basic seamanship, piloting and docking, boat safety and organization and supervision of dive activities. Checking in divers, handing out gear and even serving as fish feeder on snorkel trips are all a part of their assignment in addition to guiding the group underwater.

COMPRESSOR OPERATIONS AND EQUIPMENT MANAGEMENT (PADI EQUIPMENT SPECIALTY): Resort operations, especially island locations, are dependent upon professionals who understand the functioning, operation and maintenance of the air station and the center's equipment stock. At Pro Dive, students receive hands-on experience and attend a manufacturer's seminar.

RESORT SCUBA PROGRAMS: ROS students practice their marketing skills by recruiting their own resort students, then conduct classroom and pool sessions and escort their clients on two 30 foot dives on Ft. Lauderdale's beautiful reefs.

UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY WITH THE NIKONOS V (PADI U/W PHOTOGRAPHY SPECIALTY): Classroom lectures are combined with actual shooting experience on the reef to provide students with a well-rounded understanding of the mechanical and aesthetic aspects of U/W photography, including care and maintenance of equipment. Throughout the program, photography skills are used to augment the coral reef ecology specialty by providing a means of recording and identifying marine life species.

RESORT TRAVEL: Acting as liaison for visiting vacationers is an important part of resort operations. Pro Dive prepares the student for the many aspects of dive travel, including tips on creating exciting dive packages, incorporating continuing education for travelers and planning pre and post travel gatherings for groups.

SALES AND HUMAN RELATIONS: Pro Dive's store manager walks students through the entire concept of retail sales and operation, emphasizing basic sales, computer skills, inventory and guiding customer purchases. As part of their daily routine, students gain hands-on experience in the shop, assisting with student enrollments and charter bookings.

ADVANCED DIVING ACCIDENT MANAGEMENT: Included in this portion of the program is a hyperbaric chamber field trip, hands-on training in oxygen administration, neurological exam, accident evaluation and preparation for patient transport and evacuation. Taking students to an advanced level beyond basic rescue skills, the course focuses on providing immediate control of the situation in remote sites where resources may be restricted.

CORAL REEF ECOLOGY (PADI CORAL REEF ECOLOGY AND U/W NATURALIST): Covering everything from the mangroves to the coral reefs, this portion of the program prepares the student to take a major role in protecting the environment by imparting important information regarding the ecosystem, its normal functioning and minimizing diver impact. Imparting knowledge of the marine life to visitors also greatly enhances their enjoyment of the whole dive experience.

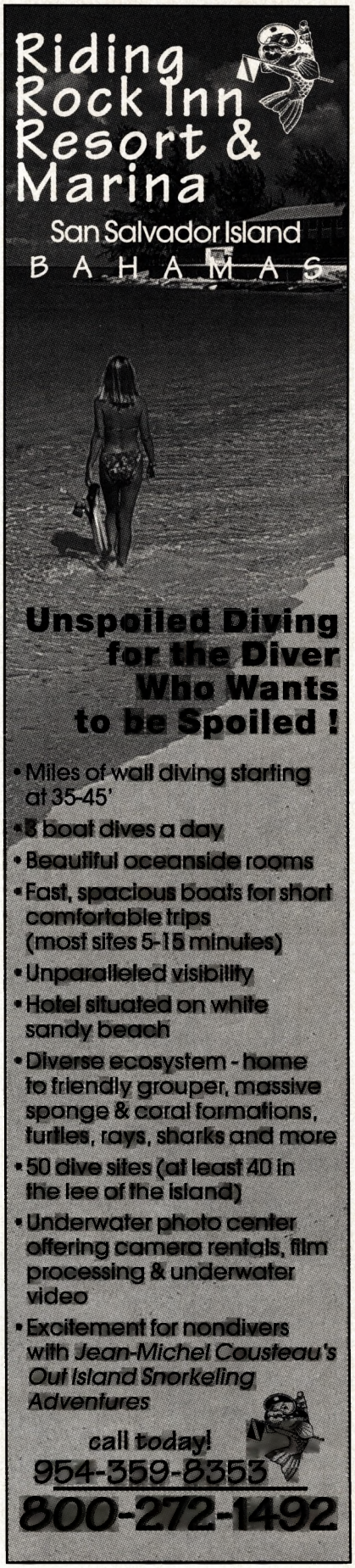
DRIFT DIVING (PADI DRIFT DIVING SPECIALTY): With the proximity of the Gulf Stream, south Florida is the capital of drift diving and students have ample opportunity to plan, organize and practice drift techniques on their boat dives.

MULTI-LEVEL COMPUTER ASSISTED DIVING (PADI MULTI-LEVEL COMPUTER DIVING SPECIALTY): Students study theories and principles involved in computer and multi-level no decompression diving, as well as current recommendations for flying after diving.

REBREATHER: A brief introduction to rebreathers is included in the ROS program and students have the opportunity to register for the full course, which immediately follows ROS. Certifications available include TDI's basic and instructor rating for rebreather diving.

The 60 foot glassbottom boat* Pro Diver II *is instrumental in providing ROS students with hands-on training experiences.

JOB PLACEMENT SERVICE: Pro Dive's free job placement service provides a professional resume with ROS performance scores and an initial phone or personal interview arranged by the placement director. Significant research and consideration goes into matching graduates to employer requests. Since 1989, more than 500 instructors have completed the ROS program with nearly 100 percent finding placement in dive resorts all over the world. Lifetime placement service is just one of the many outstanding features of this extraordinary training program. For more information, contact Pro Dive by phone or fax at (954) 761-8915.



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Dark, Dank & Dynamic

COMMERCIAL DIVING CAN BE AN EXCITING CAREER PATH—DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

Background: Tamara Brown (blue jacket) oversees Divers Academy's real life conditions training facility: a dock along the murky, cold waters of the Delaware River. The school finds jobs for 98 percent of its graduates.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY HERB SEGARS

The middle 1990s have been a time of corporate downsizing, mass layoffs, little if any increases in salary and increased family expenses. Gone are the days of job security; these days the bottom line dictates your future.

In the commercial dive contracting business, it is a time of diversification. Companies that had specialized in specific aspects of commercial diving—such as oil rig work in the Gulf of Mexico—found a need to move into other markets when their main staple slowed. This movement means a need for diversified commercial divers.

Perhaps this is the time to start thinking of a new career in commercial diving. Changing or beginning a career is a big decision. Ideally, the transition happens quickly at a reasonable cost and the end result is steady work and a better than average salary potential.

How about a career that will have you working in five months with a full range of skills, provide an opportunity to travel, present exciting challenges and adventure and have the potential for excellent income? That field is commercial diving.

Making the decision to become a commercial diver is easy; choosing the right dive school is much more difficult. Some factors to consider are reasonable costs, financial assistance programs, a reasonable training period, the best and most comprehensive training, experienced instructors, state of the art equipment and real life training conditions. A school with all these attributes is the Divers Academy of the Eastern Seaboard.

For firsthand information, give them a call and talk to their staff. They will give you honest information about becoming a commercial diver because they want you to succeed in your new career. You will be told the waters of the Delaware River are cold in the winter; that Divers Academy's real life in-water training is done in poor visibility; and the

(Continued on Page 50)

Why I want to go to Barbados on my next dive vacation

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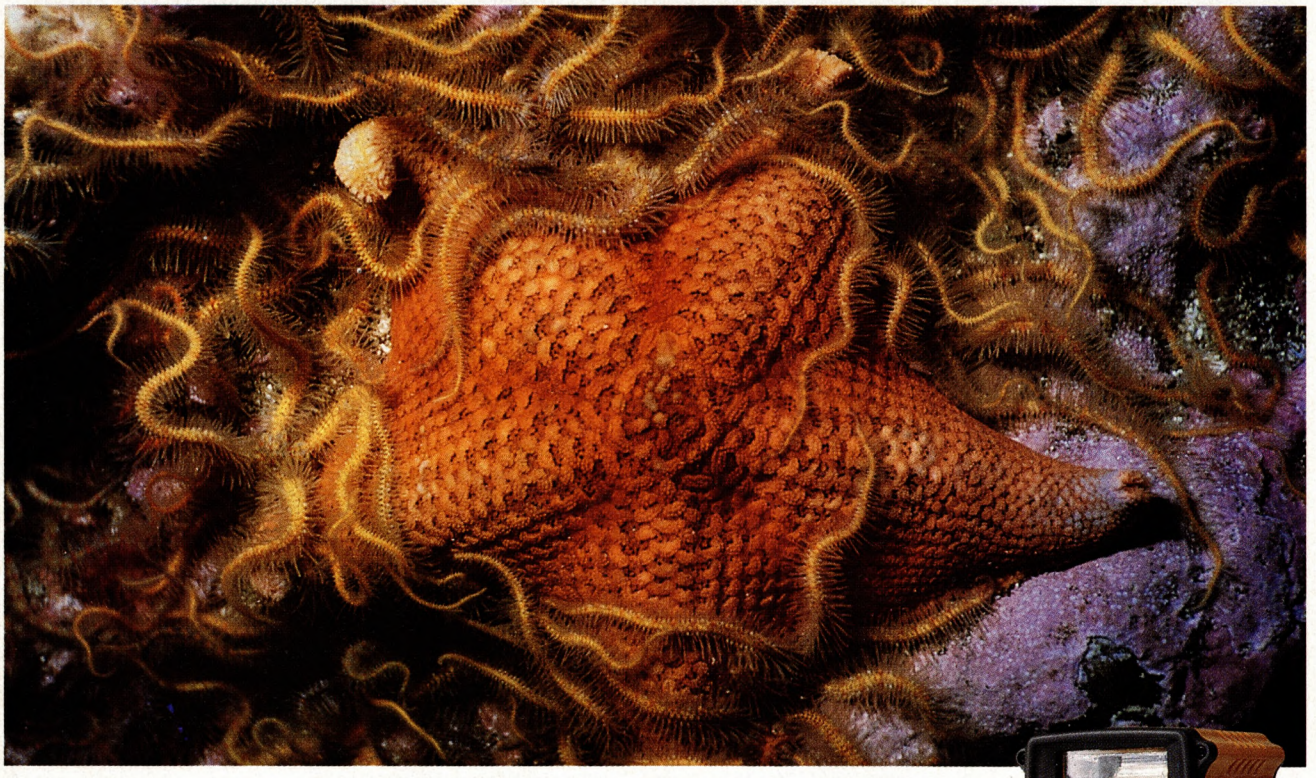
Sea & Sea MX-10

POINT AND SHOOT SIMPLICITY; PROFESSIONAL QUALITY PHOTOS

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL



Each year Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California, offers an advanced professional underwater photography course. Several trips aboard the school vessel *Just Love* are made to the Channel Islands. Working professional photographers are often invited to come along so the students have the opportunity to learn first-hand.

This year we were invited to join the expedition and dive San Clemente and Santa Barbara Islands. We are not sure what the students were expecting but we definitely gave them a surprise. In addition to our standard underwater photo systems, we brought aboard Sea & Sea's underwater point and shoot camera, the MX-10. Viewing our setup for the first time, the students laughed and kidded us about our little toy camera.

The MX-10 has a permanent, focus-free 32mm lens and an internal flash for topside use. This lens can also be used underwater and there are two accessory lenses; a 20mm wide angle or a macro. These can be attached to the front of the permanent lens via a bayonet mount. You can even switch lenses underwater! A separate flash—the YS-40—is also available for underwater use.

Loading the camera is quick and easy. Simply release the latch and open the backplate. Inside is a second backplate. Open it and drop in the film cassette. (Two AA batteries next to the take-up spool power the camera.) When the internal backplate is closed, the camera automatically pulls the film onto the take-up spool. Before closing the backplate set the film speed, selecting either ISO 100 or 400. Advance the film a couple of frames by depressing the shutter release on the front of the camera.

There is a blue O-ring on the outer backplate, it should be cleaned and lightly coated with silicone grease, then replaced, before closing the backplate.

The camera has two controls on the front, the shutter release and the aperture control. This latter has settings from f/4.5 to f/22. Two special f/stops—f/4.5 and f/11—fire the internal flash.

The cordless YS-40 flash is powered by four AA batteries. It attaches to the side of

Top: The Sea Bat and brittlestars were photographed with the MX-10 macro lens. Above: MX-10 with YS-40 flash.

The British Virgin Islands

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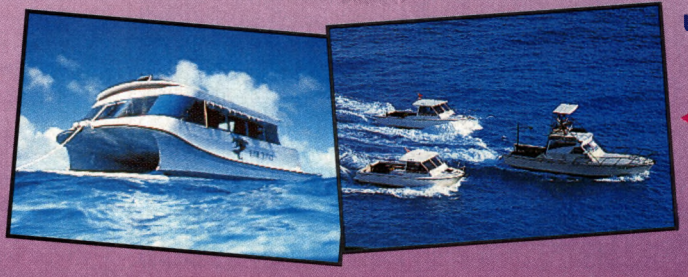

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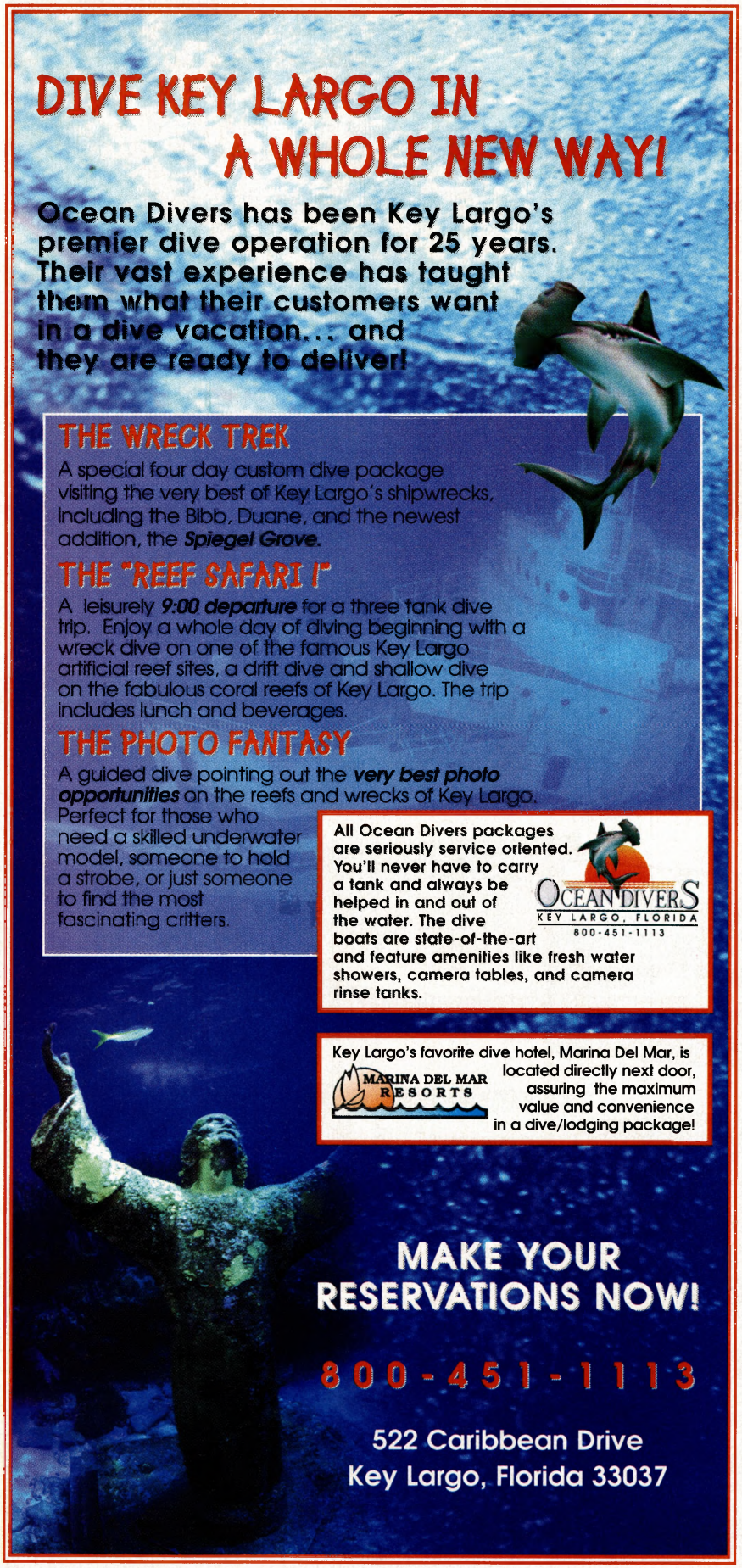


SEA & SEA MX-10

the camera via a hot shoe, much like the hot shoe found on the top of land cameras. An infrared sensor in the base of the flash mates with an identical sensor in the camera. A diffuser should be slipped over the flash head for both wide angle and macro photos.

The MX-10 camera and flash form a compact package weighing just three pounds. It is light enough to use snorkeling and easy enough for any member of the family—even a child—to operate.

MX-10 SPECIFICATIONS

MX-10 camera	35mm fixed focus
Lens	32mm f/4.5
Depth	150 feet
Shutter	Leaf shutter, 1/100 second
Film advance	Auto
Viewfinder	80 percent of frame
Strobe	Built-in
Low exposure	Red light indicates available light too low
Power	Two AA batteries
Dimensions	3.7 by 6.2 by 2.8 inches
Suggested retail	$413.00

CAMERA ACCESSORIES

Macro lens	$156.95
20mm lens	$271.00
Close-up lens	Available soon
Lens caddy	Available soon

YS-40 FLASH

Beam angle	72 degrees
Power	Four AA batteries
Recycle time (seconds)	5 w/alkalines 3 w/nickel-cadmiums
# of flashes	100 w/alkaline 50 w/nickel-cadmiums
Sync	Infrared optical trigger
Depth	150 feet
Suggested retail	$264.00

Our first test shots were done using the1:4 macro lens and framer because when we descended we found the ocean floor blanketed with brittlestars. After turning the YS-40 flash on, we set the aperture control to f/16 and pressed the shutter. The flash fired and the camera automatically advanced the film. Hey, this was pretty easy!

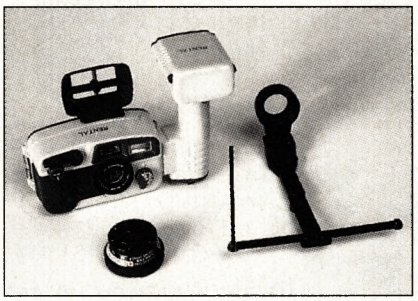
In the middle of the dive, we decided we wanted photos of a larger area. We removed the macro lens/framer and the flash diffuser and set the aperture to f/8. We finished the roll of film by taking photos from a distance of three and a half feet.

When we got back onto the boat, we processed our film. As we looked at it on a light box with a loupe, we realized this point and shoot camera was providing professional quality photos. When the students looked at our film they laughed no longer.

After a complete testing of the normal and macro combinations, we moved on to the wide angle setup, attaching the

f/4.5 20mm lens to the front of the standard lens. After slipping a sportsfinder onto the top of the MX-10 we were ready to get wet again. Since the primary and the 20mm lenses are fixed focus, we had only to look to determine the necessary distance for the f/stop we were using. Garibaldi gliding through the kelp forests made perfect subjects for our wide angle tests.

For flash fill, lightly press the shutter release until a red light appears in the viewer. Then open the aperture until the red light goes out. You must make sure that you are the correct distance for the f/stop indicated before triggering the shutter. At



The Sea & Sea MX-10 system includes the YS-40 flash (with diffuser), macro lens with framer and the 20mm wide angle lens.

UPDATE

After our tests were complete, we learned there are three changes on the horizon for the MX-10 system. The new YS-40A flash will allow the photographer to select either manual or two automatic f/stops. ISO 100 film would dictate the use f/4.5; ISO 400 film would allow the use of f/8. The distance range for these new auto flash settings would be from .82 - 5.45 feet.

In addition to the improved YS-40A flash, a new close-up lens and a lens caddy are planned for the MX-10 system. All should be available early this year.

f/8, for instance, everything will be in sharp focus from 2.3 to 12.6 feet.

On the fifth day of our trip, Ernest H. Brooks, the president of Brooks Institute, asked to borrow the MX-10. He normally shoots black and white images with a housed Hasselblad but was impressed with our results. He found the MX-10 a great complement to his medium format system and was very excited about the photos he took with it. We think you'll be impressed, too!

For more information about the MX-10, contact your local Sea & Sea dealer or Sea & Sea Underwater Photography USA at 2105 Camino Vida Roble, Suite L, Carlsbad, CA 92009; (619) 929-1909.

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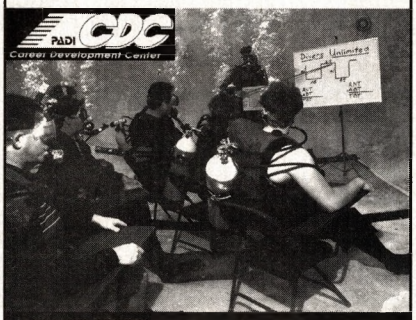

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SDM Editors Pick Items That Make Diving Safer, Easier and More Fun!

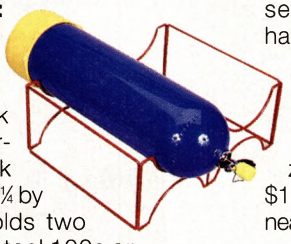
BY TY SAWYER
PHOTOS BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

EDITORS' PICK OF THE MONTH

DIVER DOWN TANKPAK: Since we must lug our tanks we may as well do it in comfort. This water and mildew resistant tank pack has shoulder straps for backpack or sling-style carrying, a handgrip and one-quarter inch padding. This durable pack is made of rugged Cordura nylon with a 600 denier PVC coating and a 100 denier nylon lining. It has a strong industrial zipper. The TankPak straps are available in several colors. $59.95. For information on the Diver Down dealer near you, call (800) 870-DIVE.

PATCO AQUA HEAT: Relief for cold water divers. Defeat heat loss with this practical personal underwater heater. Aqua Heat brings tropical conditions to your wetsuit and an element of safety to help make your diving more enjoyable. The heating pad is only 5 by 9 inches and .8 inches thick. Total weight, including battery, is 4.6 pounds; Aqua Heat is 2.5 pounds negative in water. This easy to use device is available for $249 and comes with its own rechargeable battery. For information on your nearest dealer, contact Patco at (410) 444-4010.

MANTA RACKS: The Manta Rack is a lightweight and versatile frame for tank stacking and storage. Each rack measures 8 by 16¼ by 20 inches and holds two aluminum 80s, steel 100s or 120s. The frame is made of electro-statically coated ¼ inch steel wire, weighs less than three pounds and is welded in 12 places for maximum strength. The Manta Rack is available in blue, red or yellow for about $45. Purchasing information is available at (800) 397-3901.



GERBER BC KNIVES: The River Shorty (blunt nose) and the River Runner are two new diving knives from a legendary knife maker. Each has a modified stainless steel blade, Lustran ABS handle and a fiberglass-filled nylon quick-release sheath. Their size makes them perfect for mounting on a BC. The River Shorty is three inches long; the River Runner, 3 9/16 inches. Both knives retail for $35.60. For information on your nearest Gerber knives dealer, call (503) 639-6161.

GREGG WATER RESISTANT BOOK COVERS: There is nothing worse than a soggy book. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find a water free environment on a dive boat. These water resistant book covers change all that and protect your reading material from water or other environmental damage. Available in several colors for hardcovers, paperbacks and other books in sizes S through XXL. Made of long lasting Cordura nylon, these book covers have a built-in bookmark, carrying handle, zippered pocket for keys, and more. $17.95 to $19.95. For information on your nearest dealer, call (800) 447-3440.

CEDEO PUBLISHING LASSEN CALENDAR CD-ROM: The breathtaking underwater creations of Christian Lassen can now become part of your daily regime. In addition to more than 50 stunning paintings, the Lassen Calendar includes daily, weekly and monthly calendar views, a to do list, screensaver, address book, event scheduling and a computer generated jigsaw puzzle. The CD-ROM is available for PCs with Windows 3.1 or later and Windows 95. $29.95. For more information, call (800) 233-2624.

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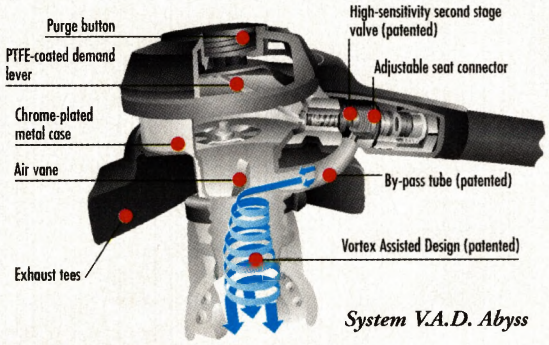


System V.A.D. Abyss

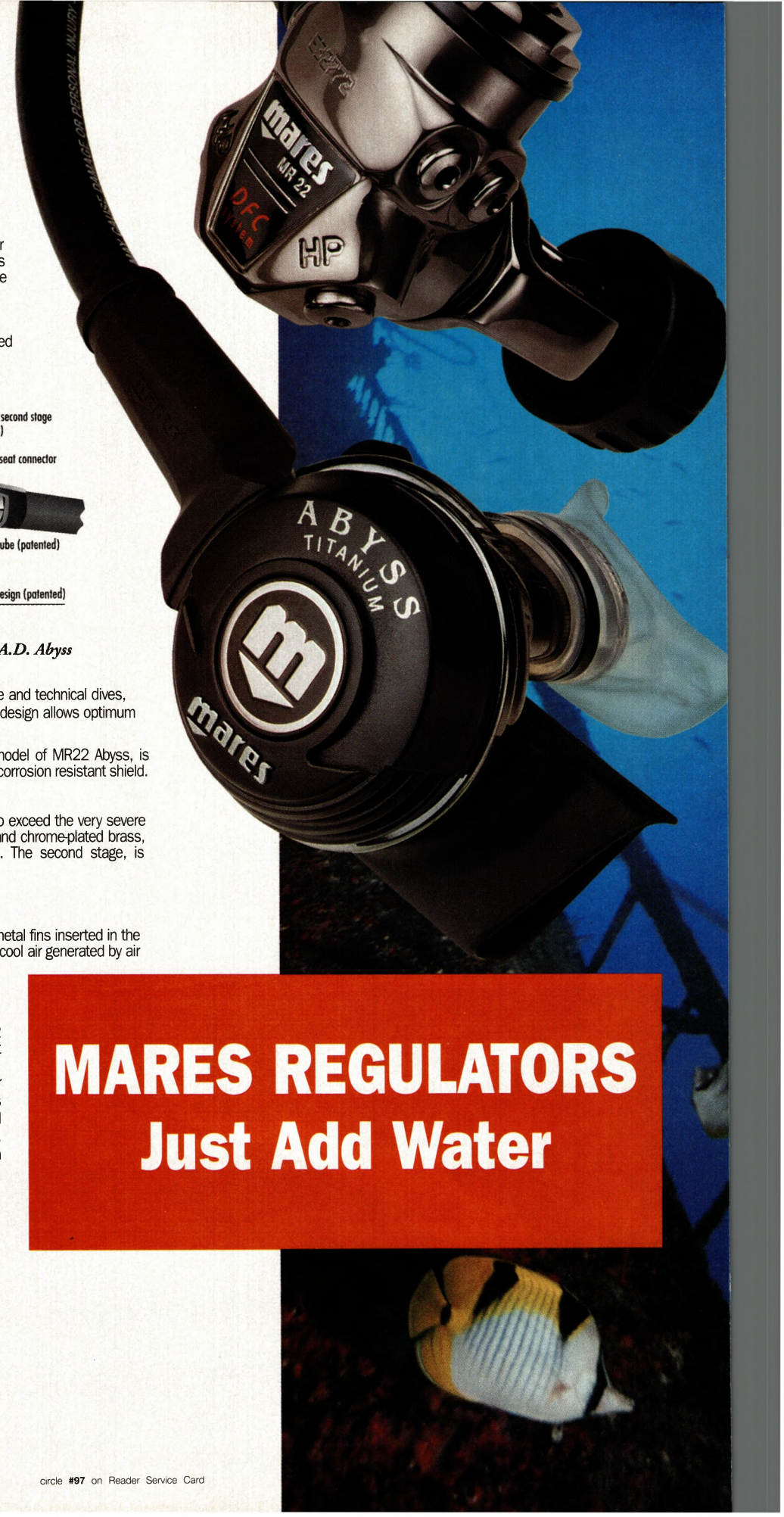
MR22 Abyss and MR22 Abyss Titanium.
Abyss is a unique full-metal regulator. Designed for extreme and technical dives, it is also ideal for recreational diving. The MR22 first stage design allows optimum hose positioning and features two angled HP ports.

The Abyss Titanium, technologically the most advanced model of MR22 Abyss, is coated with Titanium to form an exceptionally abrasion and corrosion resistant shield.

MR12 Voltrex, US Navy Approved.
Tested in September 1993, the MR12 Voltrex was found to exceed the very severe specifications of the US Navy. Completely made of nickel-and chrome-plated brass, the first stage features five LP ports and one HP port. The second stage, is constructed of metal for optimal performance.

MR12 Akros, a winning combination of metal and technopolymer.
The Akros second stage is molded in technopolymer with metal fins inserted in the body to inhibit freezing. This is accomplished by dispersing cool air generated by air expansion during inhalation. The patented pivoting vane allows smooth and gradual breathing.

MR12 Nikos, the basics of Mares quality.
The newly designed Nikos is fitted with the Mares MR12 DFC balanced diaphragm first stage guaranteeing great performance and reliability.
As a result of a lightweight, second stage technopolymer body, the Nikos provides maximum comfort and helps reduce jaw fatigue. The threaded cover and overmolded water holes limit free flowing when diving through currents. Featuring 5 LP ports and 1 HP port, Nikos offers high performance and reliability at an affordable price.



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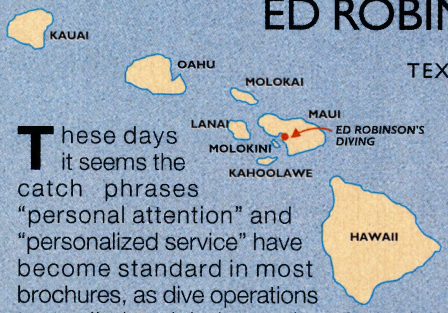
ED ROBINSON'S DIVING ADVENTURES

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAMMY PELUSO



These days it seems the catch phrases "personal attention" and "personalized service" have become standard in most brochures, as dive operations try to distinguish themselves from the competition. Realistically, to some degree, all dive operations indulge divers: gear is loaded, tours are offered, refreshments are served and briefings are given. Pampering has become an industry standard. There are, however, a few operations out there, such as Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures, that take the concept of personal service to the extreme and offer something just a little bit different.

A diver tails a Green Sea Turtle, common to Hawaii.

Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures, established in 1981 (and formally known as Hawaiian Watercolors), is one of Maui's most respected dive operators. Without the benefit of a storefront, Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures has grown over the years, relying on word of mouth and repeat business. Ed moved to Maui in 1971 and worked for years as a dive instructor, guide and boat captain. This unlimited access to Hawaii's underwater realm gave him the opportunity to spend thousands of hours learning about the reefs and perfecting his underwater photography. Ed's first book, *An Underwater Guide To Hawai'i*, is considered one of the state's foremost marine guides. Ed has also written a children's book called *From Sand to Sea* and has had his work published in hundreds of publications, including Oceans, Audubon and National Geographic.

Today, Ed runs the business with the help of his wife Sue, their partner Roger Pannier and an awesome crew of dedicated professionals. Many, such as Byrd Gleason, manager of diving operations, have been with the company for years and are an integral part of the Robinson family.

It takes about five minutes to figure out that it's the staff that really makes Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures special. Driven by a love for the sea and a passion for diving, their enthusiasm is contagious. Ed started the business because he loved to dive, his staff continues the tradition. The dive guides know Maui's underwater terrain well and will tell you exactly what to expect before you get there. This is especially helpful if you are trying to figure out which lens to put on your camera. Guided tours, limited to six divers, are always offered. Armed with a 100 watt movie light, the guides light up the

(Continued on Page 38)

photo/courtesy of Robinson's Diving Adventures

Sea Diver II ***a 30 foot, aluminum hulled Munson.***

A breaching Humpback Whale stretches magnificently from Maui's warm waters.

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Diving with the Diva QD

SEA QUEST'S INTEGRATED WEIGHT SYSTEM IN A BC DESIGNED JUST FOR WOMEN

BY TAMARA COLLINS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

I remember my first dive with the Diva in early 1995. The feeling of being cradled in a plush, padded harness designed to fit a woman's contours made a lasting impression—it was pure comfort. I also recall watching with envy as Ty Sawyer made his dive with Sea Quest's Quickdraw in early 1996. It wasn't the Quickdraw's styling or harness that turned me green—the Diva is far more unique and explicit in design—it was the integrated weight system I coveted. I wanted the opportunity to use a BC with the feminine styling of the Diva and the freedom of Sea Quest's integral Weight Holster release system.

After a little more than a year, my opportunity has arrived with the new Diva QD. Marrying the best of the Diva and the Quickdraw, Sea Quest has formed a match made in Neptune's realm, promising the unique support system and features of the first Diva BC and the unencumbered grace of diving with an integrated weight system. BCs with integrated weights have been around for a while but the Diva QD is one of the first that offers this convenience in a BC made just for women.

Including the QD, Sea Quest has five BCs that use its trademark Weight Holster release system. This well designed, easy to use system features two releasable front weight modules and two rear non-ditchable pockets. The front weight modules are contoured to rest comfortably against the body and fit into a compartment just below the zippered pockets. Pulling on a plastic handle tears the touch-fastening flap away from the BC and releases the weight module from its compartment. Up to 10 pounds of lead shot packs or hard weights fit into the weight module pockets, which are sealed with a touch-fastening flap. The rear weight pockets have quick-release buckles and can hold up to five pounds each. These pockets help distribute the weight evenly throughout the BC. The Diva's total weight capacity is 30 pounds.

The Diva QD combines Sea Quest's integral Weight Holster release system with a unique harness that is designed just for women.

A BC with this kind of weight capacity must be solid, durable and well built. Thus, the Sea Quest engineers constructed the low profile, jacket-style Diva QD from 420 denier nylon. Its single bladder is urethane coated and holds the air around the diver's back and under the arms, providing her with a wide range of motion and superior stability.

The harness of a BC has a hefty job. It must support and evenly distribute the weight of the tank. The shoulder straps, chest panels and waistband should conform to the body in order to provide the greatest stability and support, but all bodies, especially men's and women's, are not the same. The Diva's harness was designed to conform to a woman's curves, earning it an exclusive endorsement by the Women's Scuba Association. The plush waistband is contoured to rest lightly above the hips and tapers at the touch-fastening closure. Each side of the Multiset waistband connects to the plush lined, Neutrafoam padded integral body harness with contoured clips that fit into three possible channels. This gives the diver the ability to expand the waistband up to six inches. A floating, quick-release fastener clips together above the waistband, bringing the two sides of the BC together for a snug fit with a low profile.

Stretching from the waistband to the shoulder straps are the front panels, which crisscross at the chest. Sewn into the panels is a soft, stretchable Lycra material that expands and contracts with movement.

Nylon webbing connects the chest panels to the shoulder straps. These can be adjusted from the top—to lower the position of the buckle—or from the bottom—to raise the level of the chest panels and waistband. The straps also feature quick-release buckles that make

(Continued on Page 142)

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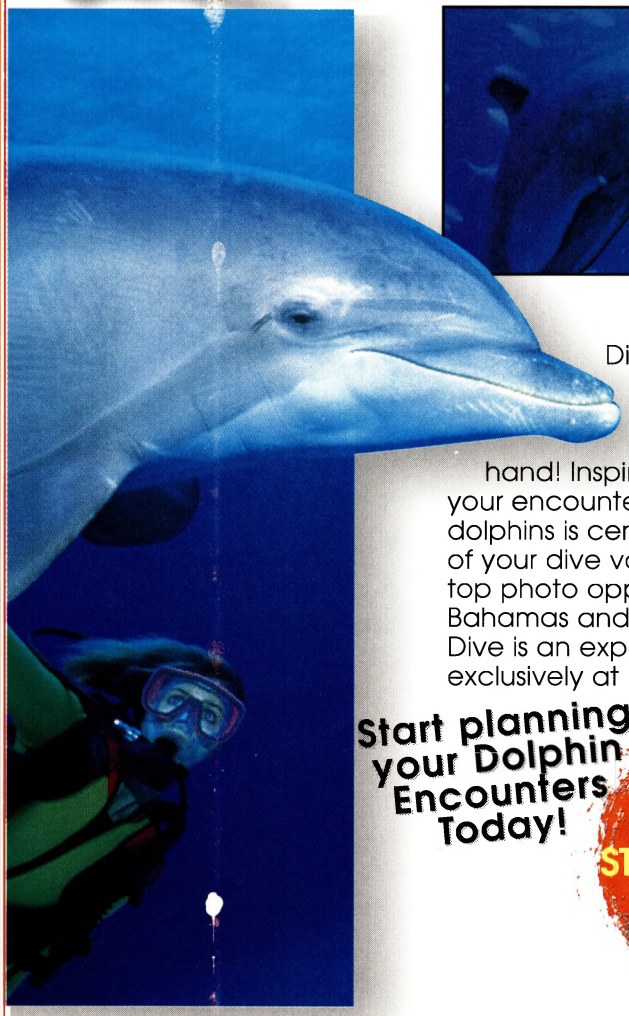

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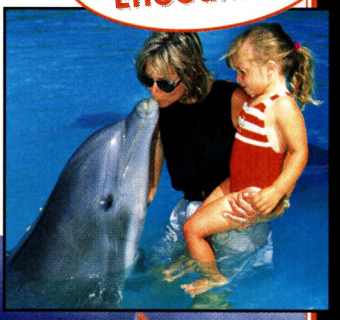

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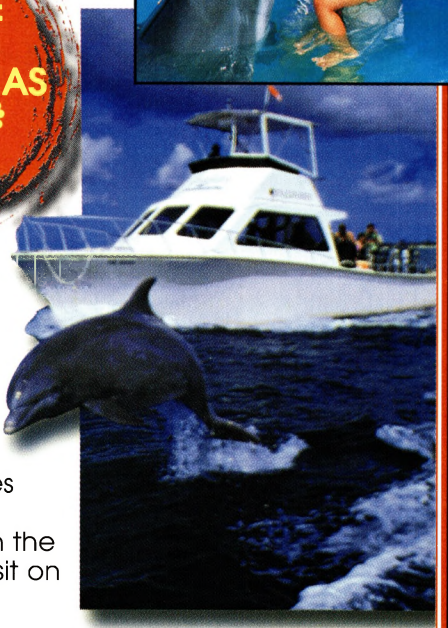

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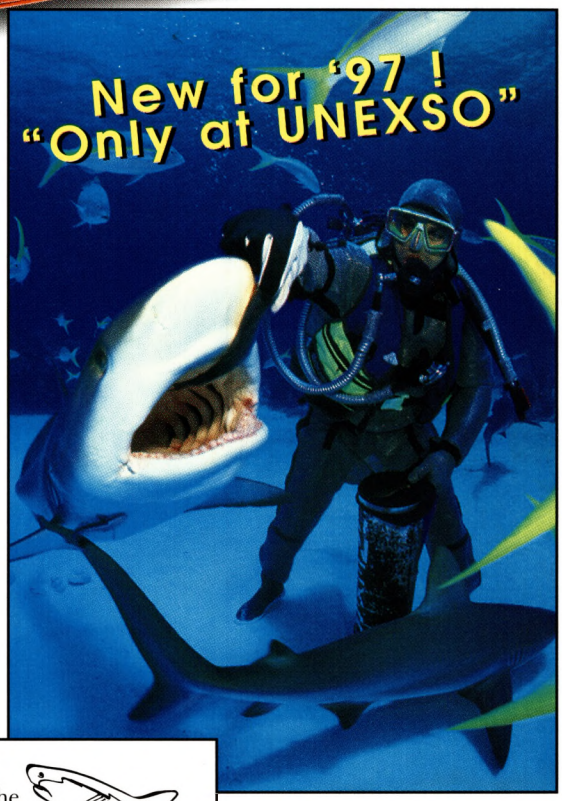

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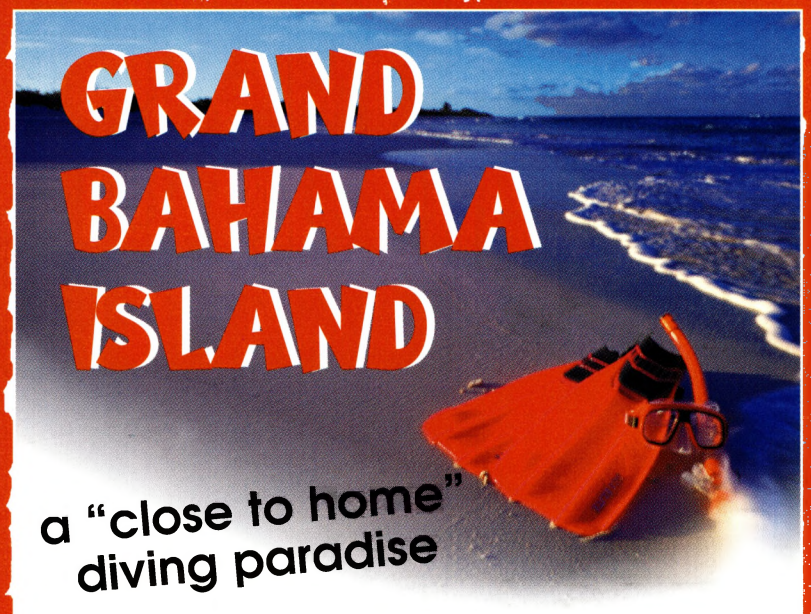

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THE TOP TEN REASONS TO DIVE THE FLORIDA KEYS

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN FRINK

Year after year the Florida Keys draw huge numbers of visiting scuba and snorkel enthusiasts from all over the world. They come to experience the gorgeous coral reefs, shipwrecks and tropical ambiance. Since the very beginning of the recreational dive industry, the Florida Keys have been revered as one of the world's most popular destinations. The reasons are as diverse as the fish on their reefs but the following are ten excellent reasons to consider the Florida Keys when planning a dive holiday.

1 ACCESSIBILITY: The Florida Keys are affectionately known as The Islands You Can Drive To, an appellation that refers to the Overseas Highway, a system of roadways and bridges that connects the islands to the Florida mainland. Historically, the highway, also known as U.S. 1, evolved from the old railroad bed of Henry Flagler's "Railroad that Went to Sea." The Key West Extension of the Florida East Coast

Railway connected 30 of the 200 islands that comprise the Keys, operating for 23 years until an horrendous hurricane wiped it out in 1935. The railroad was never rebuilt. By 1938, however, its bridges and embankments were critical components of the new highway that launched an era of automobile tourism to the Florida Keys.

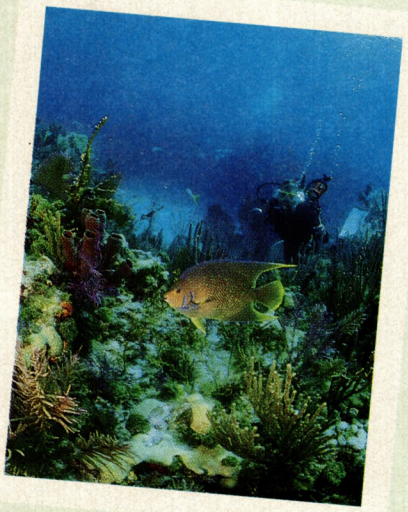
The Overseas Highway has been renovated continuously since that time and today it is safe and scenic. Southbound motorists can look out their left windows to see the turquoise expanse of the Atlantic Ocean and, on the right, view the emerald green of Florida Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. Engineering wonders such as the Seven Mile Bridge, connecting the Middle and Lower Keys, make this one of America's most unique drives.

2 CLIMATE: A variety of climatic phenomena conspire to make the Florida Keys warm and appealing year-round. The Keys are just 70 miles north of the Tropic of Cancer, the line of demarcation for the "tropics." This southerly setting provides temperatures ranging from 80 to 90°F in the summer and an average of 72 to 84°F in the winter. While much of the country is gripped in the icy embrace of snow, sleet and slush, in the Florida Keys, palm trees, warm breezes and watersports are the order of the day.

Other factors that make the weather favorable include the minimal landmass and the effects of the Gulf Stream. Because of the islands' propitious location, they don't attract the inclement weather found farther up the Florida mainland. Even Miami gets far more rain than the Keys, making weather forecasts from Miami fairly inaccurate for gauging the daily conditions of the Keys. The Gulf Stream is a massive offshore current that brings warm, clear water past the Keys from the Caribbean and The Bahamas. The prevailing onshore wind helps keep air temperatures consistently balmy and the cleansing current of the Gulf Stream helps maintain the crystalline water clarity for which the Keys are famous.

3 FAMILIARITY: Even though the Conch Republic likes to think of itself as an entity separate from the rest of the United States, passports are not required, the language is English, the currency is the U.S. dollar and electricity is the same 120 volts/60 cycles found everywhere else in North America. In many comforting ways the Florida Keys will feel like home but, as a tropical dive getaway, these islands are like none other.

4 MARINE CONSERVATION: The Florida Keys have long set the world standard of marine conservation and ecological concern. In the late 1950s, when too much spearfishing and coral collection began threatening the wondrous coral reefs off Key Largo,



John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park was created to preserve this amazing resource. Then, in 1975, the area of protection was increased with the creation of the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary. By 1981, one of the jewels of the Lower Keys reef tract was protected under the Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary legislation. Then, in 1990, the entire Florida Keys, including 2,600 square nautical miles of ocean, was established as a marine preserve under the direction of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Specific use zones are designed to ensure recreational access to the Keys' coral reefs. In some areas it is possible to spearfish or engage in other "consumptive" activities but other areas have been set aside as marine nurseries and refuges. Mooring buoys help eliminate the hazard of misplaced anchors and charter dive boat crews do their best to ensure scuba divers look but don't touch. All of this will help ensure these coral reefs are enjoyed by our children's children.

5 MARINE LIFE: Marine life in Florida is abundant. In the Florida Keys, gigantic schools of grunts still cluster under the branching arms of Elkhorn Corals and curious angelfish swim ever closer to peer at their reflection in a camera's dome port. The fish population is both diverse and plentiful. For an underwater photographer, the gregarious nature of the undersea animal is another tremendous advantage.

6 SHIPWRECKS: The shallow reefs off the Keys have long been the bane of careless mariners. While the era of wooden sailing ships left little behind but piles of ballast

(and significant treasure, as in the case of the *Atocha*), more recent wrecks—such as the World War II casualty *Benwood*—are steel hulled, providing an enduring refuge for marine life and a point of attachment for corals and colorful sponges. There is also an ever-increasing fleet of ships sunk purposely to entertain visiting divers. The *Eagle* off Islamorada, the *Thunderbolt* off Marathon, the *Cayman Salvager* and *Joe's Tug* off Key West and the U.S. Coast Guard cutters

Bibb and *Duane* off Key Largo host thousands of visiting divers every year. Each ship has its own fascinating history and offers exciting and unique dive potential. The largest, the 510 foot *Spiegel Grove*, is scheduled to be sunk off Key Largo sometime during this winter.

7 RESORT INFRASTRUCTURE: A tremendous variety of lodging options has evolved to accommodate the huge number of tourists that visit the Keys each year. Familiar chain hotels (although imbued with a distinctive Keys' character), upscale waterfront resorts, intimate guesthomes, campgrounds, condominiums and small motels, all cater to the specific needs of the traveling scuba diver. In fact, so great are the options, a call to the local dive shop might be prudent to see if a dive/lodging package might offer significant savings in price and convenience.

8 DIVE PROFESSIONALISM: The dive shops of the Florida Keys are among the best in the world. Their boats and captains are U.S. Coast Guard certified to assure optimal safety for the four to six mile ride offshore. All levels of dive instruction are offered, from resort courses and basic open water certification through specialty courses and advanced training. It is even possible to become a dive instructor in the Florida Keys. The shops offer comprehensive retail goods and services and all the latest technology, including nitrox and rebreathers.

9 ACTIVITIES FOR NONDIVERS: Unlike many destinations where nondivers are relegated to tedious hours ashore, the Florida Keys offer shopping, lounging on the beach, museums, fishing, sightseeing, nature walks or a huge variety of other watersports, including waverunners, parasailing or ocean kayaking. Given the quality of the shallow reef, there are wondrous opportunities for snorkelers. And, given the quality of the dive instructors, this is a perfect place for a resort course or full certification. Although you may arrive as a nondiver, there is no reason you have to go home that way.

10 SPECIAL EVENTS: Throughout the year the Florida Keys host a variety of special events of interest to traveling divers, ranging from the famed **NIKONOS SHOOTOUT** in Key Largo to the **UNDERWATER MUSIC FESTIVAL AT LOOE KEY**. Ask your local dive operator for a schedule of events or stay in touch by visiting the Web Site at **HTTP:/WWW.FLAKEYS.COM** or dialing **(800) FLA-KEYS** for more information.

The Florida Keys are easily accessible via automobile, of course, but those who prefer to fly will do well to choose **AMERICAN AIRLINES**, *Something Special to the Florida Keys*, to Miami with connecting flights on **AMERICAN EAGLE** to Marathon or Key West. For reservations, just call (800) 433-7300.

Call one of the following dive operators for dive and accommodations information.

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Sharky's Dive Center Key Largo's Most Complete Center	(800)935-DIVE (305)451-5533

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Lady Cyana Divers, Inc.	(800)221-8717 (305)664-8717
Lookout Lodge Boat on Premises	(800)870-1772 (305)852-9915
Ocean Quest Dive Center www.oceanquestdivecenter.com	(305)852-8770 (800)356-8798

MARATHON KEY

Abyss Pro Dive at Holiday Inn Abyss Pro Dive at Hawk's Cay Abyss Fax Line	(800)457-0134 (800)432-2242 (305)743-7081
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Seaclypse Divers at Oceanside Marina	(800)626-6396 (305)296-1975
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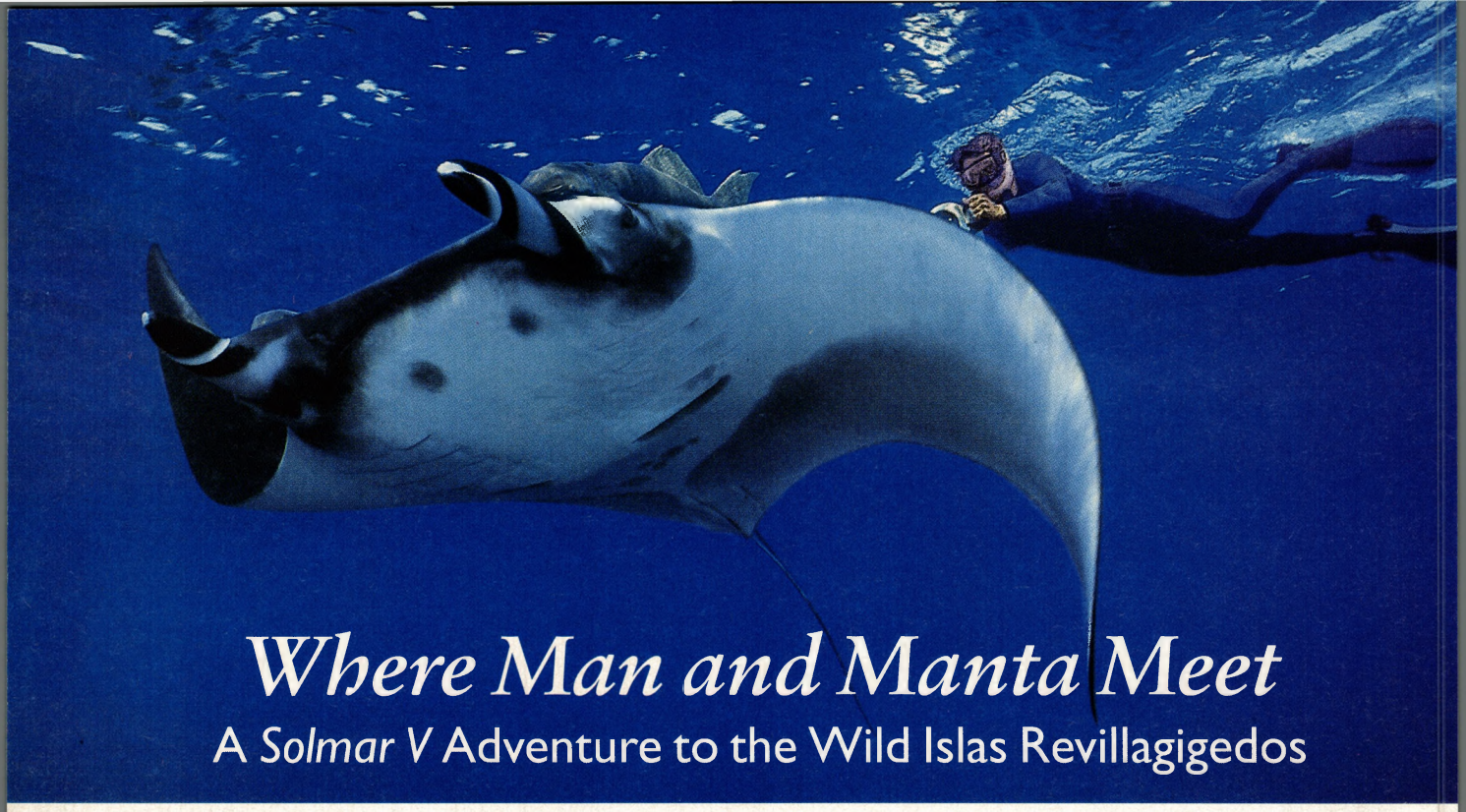


Where Man and Manta Meet

A *Solmar V* Adventure to the Wild Islas Revillagigedos

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY WALT STEARNS

Making a safety stop at five feet, I looked below me and couldn't help but laugh. The scene resembled a game of follow the leader as two large Manta Rays, both with wingspans of roughly 17 feet, cruised in formation, with a lone videographer bringing up the rear. My encounter with them had lasted close to 20 minutes. Now out of film and low on air, I could only watch my two new piscine friends and my dive partner, Jose Moya, a professional videographer from Spain, disappear into the distance. Minutes later the three reappeared, still in formation. As they came closer, it was obvious the mantas were not tired of playing.

When a manta wants to interact, it will typically take the initiative and, gliding overhead, bask in the diver's bubbles. The manta's proximity allows the diver ample opportunity to gently caress its underside. This encounter can be a ballet of giant somersaults, with the manta making several slow passes overhead. The diver should not wear gloves and should take care not to hold onto the animal.

While I love getting close to my subjects, taking such an active role in this encounter took its toll. A foot above my head, two room sized animals had jockeyed for more tummy rubs until the skin on my fingertips was rubbed raw. Unlike a stingray's velvety belly, a manta's underside is highly abrasive. Next time, Jose gets to be the masseur!

The Solmar V

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

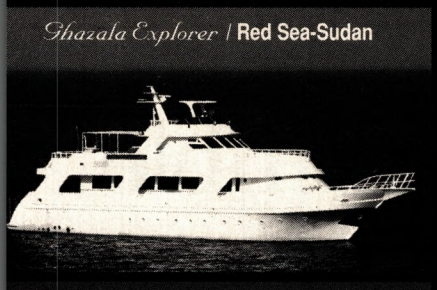
Solmar V Cruises are best known for:

- Manta Rays and Hammerheads
- Variety of fishlife
- Large schools of fish
- Seasonally: Humpbacks

While the first leg of our trip had provided plenty of large schooling fish, Hammerhead Sharks and one or two Manta Rays off Socorro Island, nothing compared to what we saw around San Benedicto Island. Everywhere we turned there were Manta Rays. Our best collective estimate for this day was somewhere in the neighborhood of 30.

Witnessing one of these immense, delta-winged giants glide effortlessly through the water is a memorable experience. Having a full acrobatic, tactile encounter was truly awe-inspiring. Among the destinations where divers can experience this with mantas, San Benedicto, in the Revillagigedos Islands, is one of the most noted. The specimens found in the vicinity of these islands are regarded as some of the largest in the Pacific, with wingspans as great as 21 feet.

To find the Islas Revillagigedos (also called the Socorro Islands) on a world map can be a bit of a challenge. The volcanic Revillagigedos' three, tiny, desolate landmasses—San Benedicto (220 miles south of Baja), Socorro (35 miles south of



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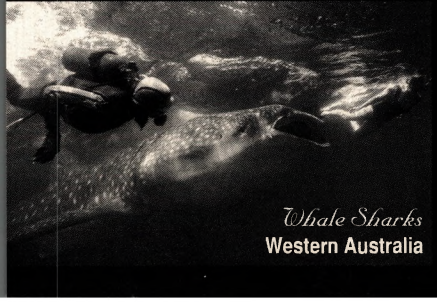

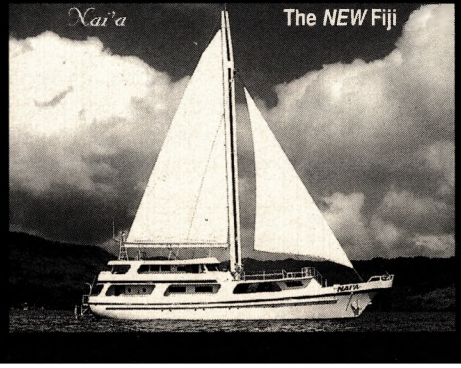

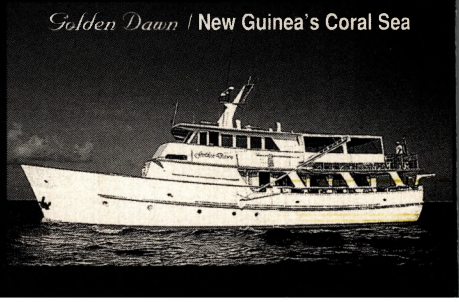

San Benedicto) and Clarion (80 miles west)—seldom amount to more than an ink dot. What they may lack in stature, they make up for in marine life encounters. Besides the large population of reef beauties such as Clarion and King Angelfish, Barberfish and Moorish Idols, the waters are also home to large schools of jacks, tuna and, of course, Scalloped Hammerheads and giant Manta Rays.

What draws marine life to the Socorro Islands is a wealth of food, namely plankton, along with favorable water temperatures. Year-round temperatures range from 69°F (owing to nutrient laden upwellings) to highs of 82. Big animals such as Manta Rays and sharks tend to favor

The luxurious and convenient Solmar Hotel overlooks one of Cabo San Lucas' most secluded and exquisite beaches.

temperatures in the 70 to 76°F range. Underwater visibility around the islands is customarily 80 to 100 feet but can sometimes fall to 35 to 50 feet where upwellings occur (sometimes triggering plankton blooms). Unfortunately, for U/W photographers, the big fellows seem to like these areas. When conditions reach their apex, with temperatures in the mid 80s and visibility at 100 feet, the big guys are usually nowhere to be seen—too little food and too much warm water!

Currents ranging from one to four knots, sometimes combined with strong surge from oceanic swells, are a constant in the Socorro Islands. Owing to the location's remoteness and propensity for currents, there is no night diving.

Which wild and woolly Socorro Islands dive sites are visited is dictated by sea conditions. The underwater terrain is comprised of either a large submerged ridge, a boulder field on a sloping bottom or huge pinnacles shooting up from the depths. A trademark is the abundance of fish.

Two of San Benedicto's most prominent sites for manta encounters are the **Boiler**, a huge pinnacle rising more than 175 feet from the depths and stopping short of the surface, and the rocky, boulder laden shelf of **Roca Fortuna**.

Hammerheads can also be found here but, as with most oceanic nomads, there

SCUBA QUIZ

Matching Jumble

BY DENNIS K. GRAVER

Unscramble the jumbled words, form six diving related words and match them to the numbered definitions. When the quiz is completed correctly, the circled letters (in the order listed) form a five word sentence stating an important dive safety rule. Do your best to avoid looking at the answers until you complete the quiz.

__ 1.	Non-flowering aquatic plants	A. RPAMC	__O__
__ 2.	Microscopic air sacs in the lungs	B. LIIGCEN	___O___
__ 3.	Low, rounded forms of energy movement in water	C. VEAWS	O____
__ 4.	A muscle spasm that causes pain and temporary disability	D. SSIAONYC	__O_____
__ 5.	A depth indicated by a dive computer above which one should not ascend	E. YCOOLGE	_____O
__ 6.	Wind generated energy forms that move in water	F. PTSSEI	O_____
__ 7.	A concentrated flow of water emerging from the ground	G. IAEHDGN	___O___
__ 8.	The point where part or all of a flow of water sinks into the ground	H. PNGRIS	___O__
__ 9.	Two layers of thin membrane that surround the lungs	I. ILOEVLA	__O_____
__ 10.	Strands of kelp	J. EAAGL	____O
__ 11.	The study of living organisms in their environments	K. SSLLEW	_O____
__ 12.	The horizontal interface between waters that have different densities	L. NHPOIS	_O____
__ 13.	The amount of water vapor in a gaseous atmosphere	M. TRIAAIVNO	_____O___
__ 14.	Low oxygen levels in body tissues	N. NLCLHAEOI	O_____
__ 15.	The force of resistance to movement	O. XPAHYOI	_____O
__ 16.	Bluish skin discoloration caused by insufficient blood oxygenation	P. OMOLB	O____
__ 17.	A vessel that contains matter under pressure	Q. RPLEAU	___O__
__ 18.	The local difference (in degrees) between true and magnetic north	R. IEYLDRCN	_____O__
__ 19.	A poor visibility condition caused by overpopulation of algae or plankton	S. GRAD	O___
__ 20.	A navigational course	T. DIIMUHTY	_____O

Answers: 1. J-Algae, **2.** I-Alveoli, **3.** K-Swells, **4.** A-Cramp, **5.** B-Ceiling, **6.** C-Waves, **7.** H-Spring, **8.** L-Siphon, **9.** Q-Pleura, **10.** F-Stipes, **11.** E-Ecology, **12.** N-Halocline, **13.** T-Humidity, **14.** O-Hypoxia, **15.** S-Drag **16.** D-Cyanosis, **17.** R-Cylinder, **18.** M-Variation, **19.** P-Bloom, **20.** G-Heading.

Sentence: Always dive with a buddy.

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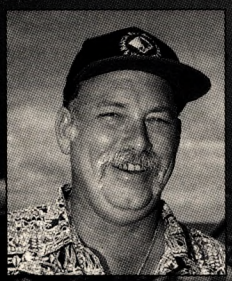

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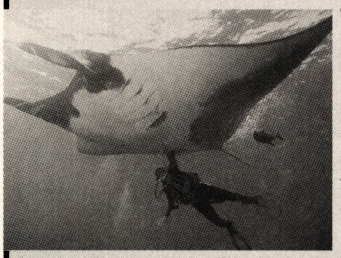

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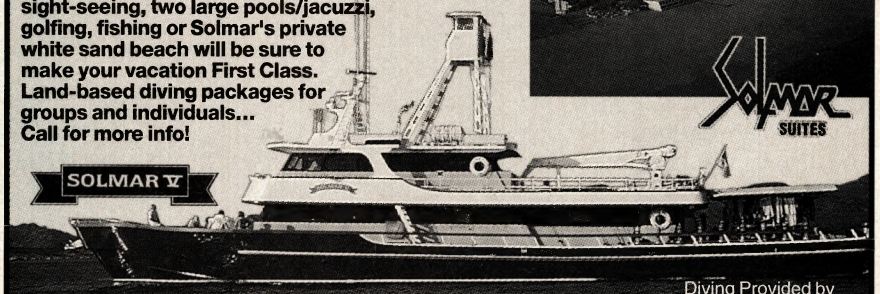

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THE SOLMAR V

is no guarantee. The sites that provide the best odds for encounters include **Cabo Pearce** and **O'neil Rock** at Socorro and **Roca Partida**, a small sliver of rock lying almost midway between Clarion and San Benedicto. Even Roca Fortuna on San Benedicto's north side has a few Hammerheads (estimated at 100 to 150 sharks at one time) now and then.

In addition to the Hammerheads and mantas, the Socorro Islands are also visited by Humpback Whales from mid January to the end of April. Leaving the cold winter waters of Alaska, these large cetaceans come to the Socorro Islands' warm waters to mate and give birth. Other visitors from the cetacean family include Bottlenose Dolphins, Pilot Whales and, occasionally, one or two pods of Killer Whales.

THE LAP OF LUXURY

Plying the waters of both the Islas Revillagigedos and the Sea of Cortez, the *Solmar V* is a genuine thing of grace and beauty. Measuring 112 feet in length she is a luxurious vessel, distinguished by her ambiance and unique decor.

The vessel's salon has the look and feel of a lavish, private pub or bistro. It is paneled with rich, polished mahogany, inset with bright brass railings and fixtures and lit by four stained glass lights. Four large, U-shaped booths, upholstered in deep forest green, provide seating for dining and lounging. Six, large decorative etched glass panels depict marlin, tuna, dolphins and a mermaid.

Creative detailing continues into the guest accommodations below decks. Comprised of six superior and six deluxe staterooms (accommodating a total of 22 divers), all have the same rich woodwork, private shower and head and vanity with sink and mirror. The cabins are cozy (roughly a meter square) but they feature air-conditioning, TV/VCR, soft, roomy bunks (two per cabin, with the exception of individual standard cabins well forward). Topside, the boat has a brand new sundeck.

When it comes to diving, the *Solmar V* is intense. The aft quarter deck is spacious, with a centrally located camera table (newly improved) and wide bench/tank racks with individual gear storage bins underneath. The stern features a broad swim platform with a wide, in-water ladder system. Next to the aft rails are four, big freshwater rinse tanks (two for cameras, two for dive gear). The *Solmar V* also utilizes a pair of large, 21 foot inflatable tenders, called pangas. Operating effectively in the wilds of the Socorro Islands means using both methods.

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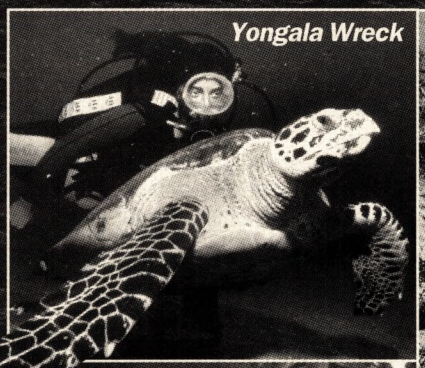
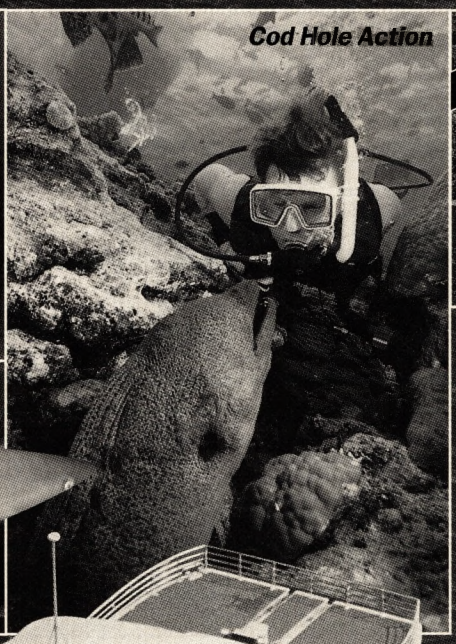
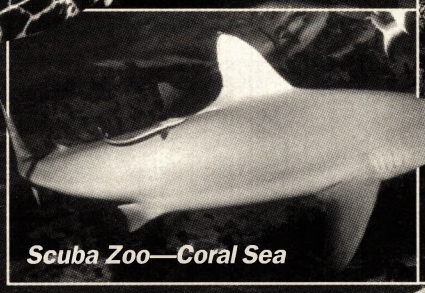

Yongala Wreck


Cod Hole Action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THE SOLMAR V

With their sights set on Clarion Island, west of Socorro and San Benedicto, the live-aboard received new twin, turbo Detroit 12V-71s. The *Solmar V*'s fuel capacity has also been increased and a second, 18 cfm compressor added.

The target season for the Socorro Islands is November through May. Each trip is nine days long (including the 22 to 24 hour sea crossing from Cabo San Lucas), providing five and a half days of diving that begins with the marine wilderness of Socorro and San Benedicto. When weather conditions are favorable, the *Solmar V* often crosses over to Roca Partida, a slender spire of rock in the middle of nowhere with a reputation for plenty of sharks and other pelagic action.

In June, which is also the start of hurricane season in the Revillagigedos, the *Solmar V* retires to drydock, returning in late June for five and eight day charters in the Sea of Cortez.

GETTING THERE

Among the several airlines servicing Cabo San Lucas is Mexicana, providing reliable and convenient flights from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York

and Miami. Upon arrival in Cabo San Lucas, travelers need only take an airport shuttle bus or taxi to the Hotel Solmar and they will be transported to the boat.

On the tip of the Baja Peninsula, the luxurious Solmar Hotel has more than 110 suites (and 14 studio units) overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It is conveniently between the heart of downtown Cabo San Lucas and the area's most secluded and exquisite beaches. Anything from additional diving excursions to offshore sportfishing, parasailing, personal watercraft, shopping and dynamic nightlife are but a few steps away.

The five day trip offers three days of diving on the noted hot spots of **Cabo Pulmo** and **Gorda Banks**. The eight day itinerary, with five and a half days of diving, ventures north of La Paz. Among the hit list is **Los Islotes**, home to the largest sea lion rookery in the Sea of Cortez, and **Las Animas**, with more sea lion action and a few Hammerheads. Not only is the Sea of Cortez noted for the dwarf species of manta, the Smoothtail (*Mobula lucasana*), it is also one of the better destinations in the Western Hemisphere for Whale Sharks sightings. Whale Shark season is from August to mid October. Although not guaranteed, the opportunity for seeing one or two of these behemoth is pretty good.

With its design and range, and the

crews members' superior service and working knowledge of the Sea of Cortez and Socorro Islands, the *Solmar V* offers the most impressive dive experiences in the region.

For more information or reservations, contact Cabo Resort Reservations at (800) 344-3349, (310) 459-9861 in California or fax (310) 454-1686. You can also write to P.O. Box 383, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

Dive Notes

BONAIRE HOTELS AND RESORTS 1997 WINTER SEASON: Hotels and resorts on Bonaire offer something for every lifestyle and budget this winter. Whether travelers choose an intimate six room guesthouse, a 224 room full service oceanfront resort or a fully equipped condominium, all are sure to enjoy Bonaire's year-round sunshine, world-renowned clear waters, wonderful coral formations and the most thriving fish population in the Caribbean. All rates are available through mid April 1997.

With 15 properties on the island offering rates starting at less than $70 per night, 14 offering rates less than $100 per night and 9 offering rates less than $140, Bonairean bargains are easy to come by. Deluxe accommodations are also available. Many are in and around the local capital, Kralendijk, and others offer waterfront accommodations steps away from world-class diving and snorkeling.

For more information, contact the Tourism Corporation Bonaire in the U.S. at (800) U-BONAIR/826-6247 or (212) 956-5911 or visit Bonaire's Web Site at http://www.interknowledge.com/.

SCOTLAND GETS CODE FOR MARINE TURTLES: Scottish Natural Heritage has produced a waterproof, A4-sized information sheet on turtles in Scottish waters. Many of the animals, particularly the Leatherback variety, are spotted off Scotland in summer months. The sheet identifies, with diagrams, the five species recorded in Britain; the law relating to turtles; how to deal with turtles entangled in nets or stranded on beaches; and where to report turtles sighted in Scottish waters. The sheet has been produced as part of the Scottish Natural Heritage's Species Action Programme, a by-product of the Government's Biodiversity Action Plan. It is available, free of charge, from SNH Publications sections, Battleby, Redgorton, Perth PH1 3EW; telephone 01738 627921, fax 827411.

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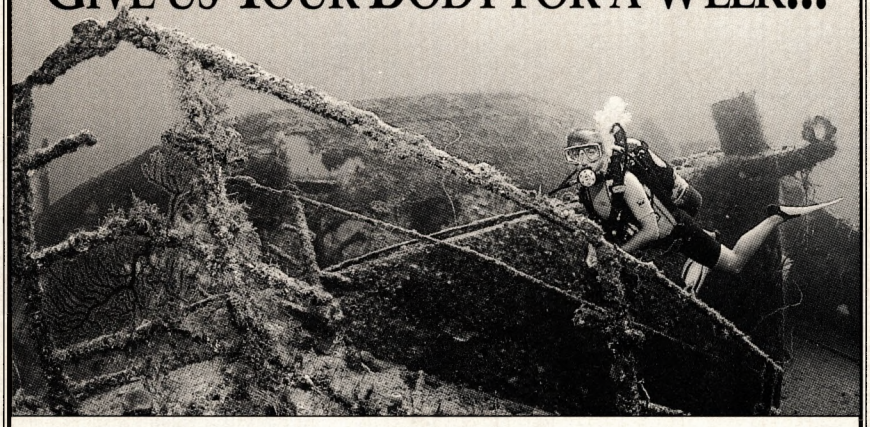

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ED ROBINSON'S

(Continued from Page 24)

reef's cracks and crevices, revealing reclusive critters and illuminating colorful corals. After each dive, the staff uses Ed's book as a reference to help guests identify critters and learn more about the fascinating underwater environment.

Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures is based in Kihei, on the western coast of Maui. All of Maui's best diving is easily accessible. A variety of charters is offered, designed to meet the needs and skill levels of all divers. Trips to Molokini Crater and the West Maui coastline are scheduled daily. These trips are open to all divers, as are Wednesday charters to the island of Lanai. On Thursdays, there's a Sunset/Night dive. This two tank adventure gives divers the opportunity to see the reef in transition as the creatures of the night emerge and diurnal critters disappear. For experienced divers, there's a Three Tank Adventure Trip, which ventures to out of the way, seldom seen places. Custom charters for private groups are also offered.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Ed Robinson's is best known for:

- Personal service
- Molokini Crater
- Green Sea Turtles
- Volcanic caverns
- Pelagic encounters with Manta Rays, Whale Sharks or Humpbacks

The shining star of Ed Robinson's fleet is the *Seadiver II*, a 30 foot, custom built, aluminum hulled Munson, designed by a diver for divers. The wheelhouse is cleverly positioned far forward and tank racks run along the center, so there's always plenty of room on board, even with a full load of 12 divers. Benches along the port and starboard sides provide comfortable seating and room below for gear storage. The sun cover provides shade; a wide swim platform and sturdy ladders make it easy to get in and out of the water. *Force*, a roomy 22 foot V-hull with a semi-enclosed cabin, is used for small groups, the Three Tank Adventure Trips and private charters.

Charters depart the Kihei boat ramp at 6:45 am and return between noon and 1:00 pm. Don't worry if you miss breakfast, once on board you'll be treated to fresh fruit, pastries and Hawaii's world famous chocolate macadamia nut coffee. Trade winds often pick up in the afternoon so charters depart early to ensure the best underwater conditions and smoothest ride. The early departures also get guests back in time to explore the island in the afternoon.

DIVING

Of all the Hawaiian Islands, Maui is the most diverse underwater, encompassing shallow, fish-filled reefs, dramatic drop-offs and grand, sun-lit cathedrals. The ter-

rain, volcanic in origin, is stark, severe, dramatic and exciting! On most reefs, stony corals carpet the seafloor and colorful sponges and encrusting corals line the undersides of caves and ledges. Swarms of tropical fish add brilliant splashes of color to the scene, while invertebrates in every size, shape and form hide like tiny treasures within the lava crevices.

On the larger side there are turtles everywhere, sharks in a range of sizes and giant Manta Rays with wingspans of up to 15 feet, often seen "flying" past the reef in graceful formation. A group on a recent charter was lucky enough to meet up with a Whale Shark off **Reef's End** at Molokini Crater; several divers even got to touch him. That's the magic of Maui—it's possible to see just about anything.

Amazingly, the crew is still finding new sites. One of the most recent discoveries is **Roger's Front Yard**, off Maui, where there are typically dozens of Green Turtles, Eagle Rays, eels, myriad tropicals and the occasional Chevron Tang. There are nearly one dozen great shallow dives along Maui's western coastline. Although the scenery is not as dramatic as the outer islands, the marine life is extraordinary. This is one of the best spots in the world for frogfish—all colors, all sizes; I've seen three on a single dive.

Another thrilling spot is **Molokini Crater**, the crescent shaped rim of an extinct volcano. Fields of Cauliflower Coral carpet the shallow sloping ledge on the inside of the crater and the nooks and crannies are packed with Whitetip Reef Sharks and eels galore: Dragons, Snowflakes, Gardens and moray. The **Backside** of Molokini is a thrilling blue water drop-off where it's possible to see just about anything.

You'll find the most sensational scenery off the island of Lanai, best known for its spectacular underwater caverns called **The Cathedrals**. Sunlight streams through the porous ceilings and bounces off the coral coated walls, giving these spots an ethereal quality that is both beautiful and unusual.

The big news this year at Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures is the addition of a new scuba operation at the gorgeous Four Seasons Resort in Wailea, south of Kihei. The new scuba center offers all levels of scuba instruction and certification, beach dives, scooter dives and educational eco-snorkel tours. Robinson's also orchestrates exotic trips to the South Pacific; a trip to Palau is planned for May.

Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures is your Maui connection for great diving; the office staff can help you arrange hotel accommodations and car rentals. Call today and start planning your Maui getaway: (800) 635-1273, (808) 879-3584 (Maui), fax (808) 874-1939 or write to P.O. Box 616, Kihei, Maui, HI 96753. Aloha!

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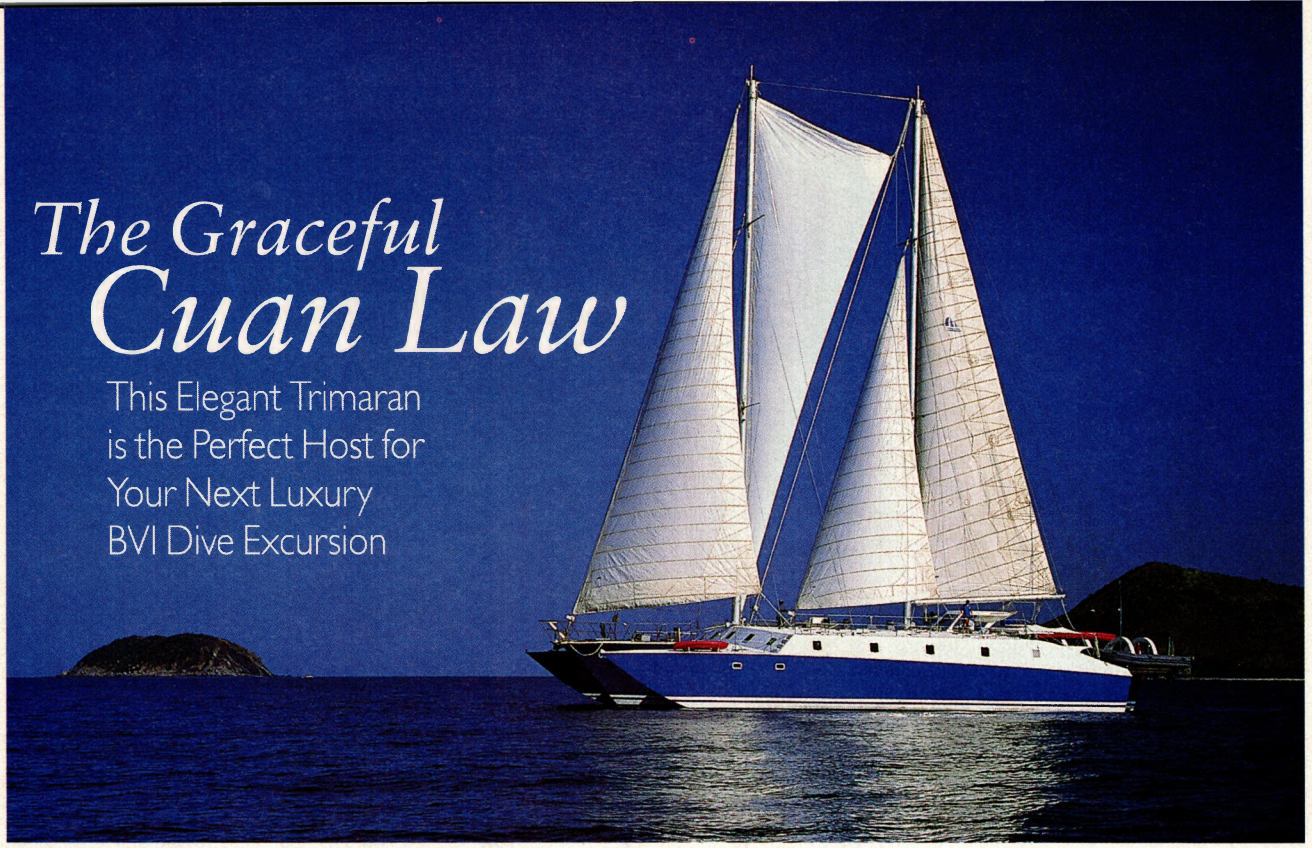
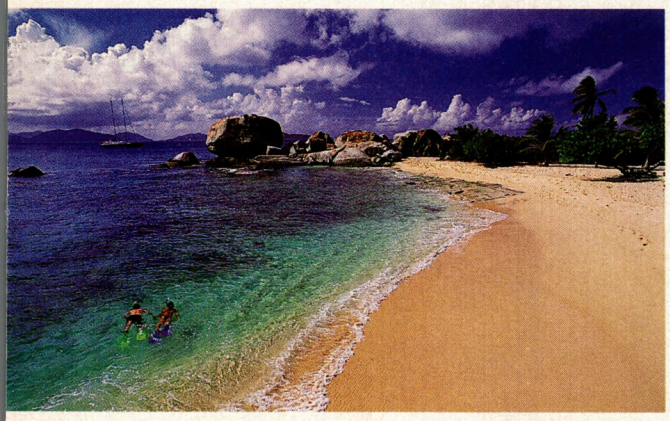


TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HARRIGAN

Cuan Law was sailing down Drake's Passage Friday evening, with the sun setting in golden splendor off the bow and a full moon rising astern like a radiant white balloon. Explorers and pirates had sailed here 300 years ago, warmed by the same sun and propelled by the same wind along this exact course. Today we were enjoying the perfect end to a glorious week of perpetually blue skies, tropical breezes wafting gently through protected bays and warm water shimmering over colorful coral reefs. Sitting on deck with new friends that I seem to have known for years, I tried to remember the adventures we had shared that made us so comfortable together now. The week had already blurred, though, into a pleasant stream of diving, sailing, eating, laughing, sunning and relaxing. We were left with a unique sensation of feeling spent and rested at the same time. It seemed the ideal way to finish a dive vacation, something I suspect happens on *Cuan Law* every week.

Above: Trade winds guide the Cuan Law over ancient sea passages to the timeless rhythms of the British Virgins. Below: Snorkeling The Baths of Virgin Gorda.



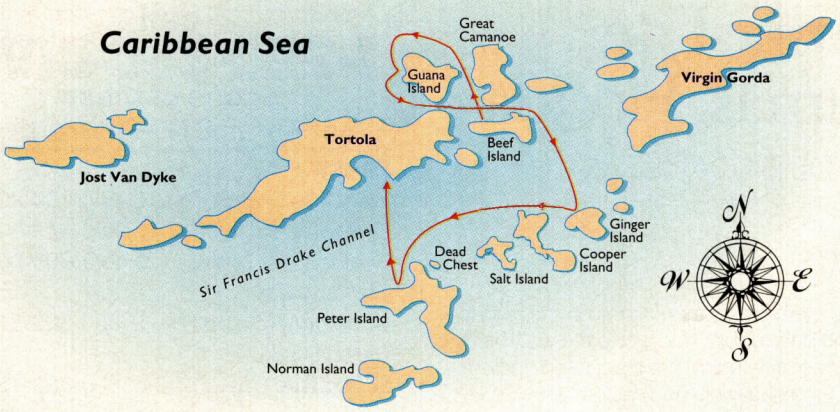
DESIGNED FOR DIVING

Custom designed for liveaboard diving and sailing, *Cuan Law* spans a piece of the ocean 105 feet long and 44 feet wide, providing lots of living space. The seven crew members, headed up by captain Danny Betta, make you feel at home immediately. Two doors on deck lead to the enormous salon, which looks more like the parlor of a fine hotel with its wall to wall carpet and comfortable couches. Ten overhead hatches and framed prints on the walls make it bright and cheery. This is the social center of the boat and the location of the bar with free sodas, juices and an impressive assortment of beer and other alcoholic drinks. Ten double cabins are arranged in a U-shape around the salon, each with air-conditioning, two overhead hatches, a big window and a private bathroom. The beds can be made up as either queens or two singles and there is plenty of walking-around space. The toilet works just like the one at home, so you don't have to worry about which valve or lever to push first. All of *Cuan Law*'s systems seemed to function flawlessly, thanks to engineer Gerry Matt's expertise.

The second salon, in the back of the boat, also functions as a theater with a collection of TV movies and a video editing center. Danny and Gerry use the equipment to produce and sell a video of the trip that will be great to watch while the snow is coming down back home. They will also help you edit your own video into a polished production.

The full width teak afterdeck is transformed from efficient dive deck to charming waterfront restaurant three times a day, a feat made possible by the clever design of the teak tables and chairs and the efficiency of hostesses Emma Askfelt and Vicky Jamieson. Breakfast and lunch are buffetstyle; dinner is a more formal sit down affair complete with wine. Think of 18 or 20 of the best meals you've ever had and you'll have a good idea of the level of dining chef Kim Huish provides aboard *Cuan Law*. Freshly baked appetizers,

Sample Route for the Cuan Law



SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Cuan Law cruises are best known for:

- RMS *Rhone* shipwreck
- Calm dive conditions
- Diversity of reef fish
- Coral and sponge growth
- The Baths

bowls of chocolate goodies and fresh fruit are placed in the salon for between meal snacks. This week is an excellent time to relax and enjoy superb cuisine—but don't come hoping to lose weight!

Johanna Askfelt investigates a coral and sponge encrusted swim-through at Santa Monica Rocks.

CUAN LAW DIVING

Diving in the British Virgin Islands exactly matches the pace and quality of life aboard *Cuan Law*—easy and excellent. Most of the dives are not deep or demanding. The water temperature is above 80°F most of the year and the visibility is usually in the 60 to 120 foot range. Surface conditions are normally quite calm and strong currents are unusual. Although large animals such as Caribbean Reef Sharks, Manta Rays, Spotted Eagle Rays and even Whale Sharks are sometimes seen, the British Virgin Islands are known more for their incredible diversity of reef fish. Pick up a fish ID book for the Caribbean and you can find almost everything in it here. The natural abundance of the reefs is protected by the National Parks Trust, which works in association with the BVI dive operators. Mooring buoys minimize anchor damage and regulations prohibit damaging or removing any plant or animal, keeping the reefs packed with life.

Three dives are planned each day, including a morning dive after breakfast, an afternoon dive after lunch and a night dive. In between there is time for kayaking, Hobie Cat sailing, snorkeling or even additional diving. Dive sites are available throughout the island chain, so Danny picks the ones that are likely to have the best conditions at the time. Either Johanna Askfelt or Gavin Bladen—PADI instructors—go on every dive; buddy teams can either stay with them or go off on their own.

Diving could be easier if you had a

(Continued on Page 137)

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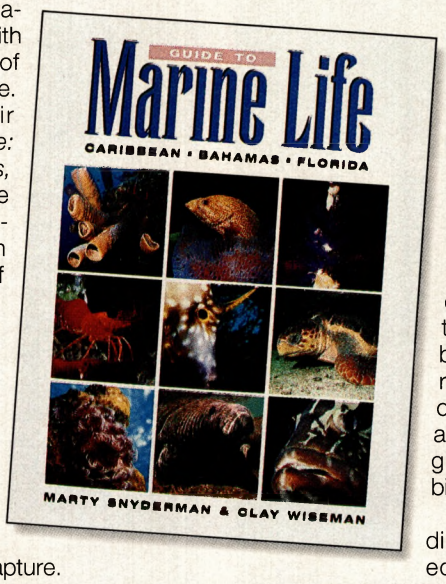
Guide to Marine Life: Caribbean, Bahamas, Florida

COMPREHENSIVE NEW GUIDE IS LOADED WITH INFORMATION, INSIGHT AND EXPERIENCE

BY TY SAWYER

Marty Snyderman and Clay Wiseman have somehow managed to stay out of the water long enough to produce a beautifully illustrated, engaging and comprehensive marine guide of exceptional craftsmanship and usefulness. Snyderman and Wiseman are both meticulous underwater naturalists and highly skilled underwater photographers with more than 40 years of combined experience. As a result, their *Guide to Marine Life: Caribbean, Bahamas, Florida* is much more than a fish identification book. Through personal vignettes of marine life encounters and a highly accessible and conversational text, the reader will discover wonderful and interesting insights into the lives of the creatures who live in this world of escape, evasion and capture.



Fishwatchers, underwater photographers and naturalists will appreciate the full range of topics that include such diverse subjects as an overview of regional geology and climate, interrelationships among marine creatures on and off the reef and how to approach a subject for the best photographic opportunity. Of particular interest are the helpful hints for finding, identifying, approaching and photographing undersea creatures. With more than 330 of the authors' best color photographs and an innovative Photo Tip box to guide the way, photo hounds and fishwatchers will find this guide a necessary asset. The frequent Photo Tip boxes provide photographers not only with helpful hints on finding and approaching a creature, but tips on the most appropriate photographic equipment and setup to use for acquiring the very best results.

The book is intelligently divided into five sections and 20 color coded chapters. Section one gives an overview and geologic history of the region. Section two details the habits of marine life on the reef, in sand and rubble, and along the wall. Here the reef community is discussed, including who eats who and the remarkable relationships that have developed among marine animals in this complex world. Section three explores the strange world of invertebrates, phylum by phylum, from sponges to sea squirts. Section four investigates the vertebrates, again phylum by phylum, beginning with an overview of the varied world of fishes. Section five discusses tips on enjoying the marine environment, what to avoid and how best to preserve this remarkable, yet delicate, world. There is also an extensive glossary and helpful bibliography.

Each marine animal discussed is illustrated with a handsome photograph that effectively supports the text and displays the authors' noteworthy skill for underwater photography. An At a Glance box provides concise identification information, including: scientific name; habitat; typical adult size; frequency of sightings; and natural history (specific location, unique abilities or relationships, feeding habits, etc.).

For anyone who is enchanted by the underwater world, the *Guide to Marine Life: Caribbean, Bahamas, Florida* is an authoritative, all-in-one guide that benefits greatly from the notable experience of its authors. The 284 page, 8½ by 11 inch softcover book was produced by Aqua Quest Publications. As an exclusive offer, a signed copy is available for $34.95 (California residents add sales tax) from Clay Wiseman's Underwater Art. For more information, contact Underwater Art, 582 Scottish Rite, #241, Santa Cruz, CA 95060; phone (408) 429-5229, fax (408) 429-4163 or e-mail UWArt@aol.com.

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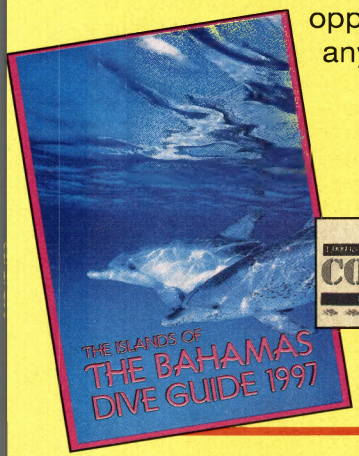

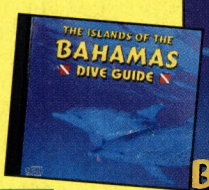

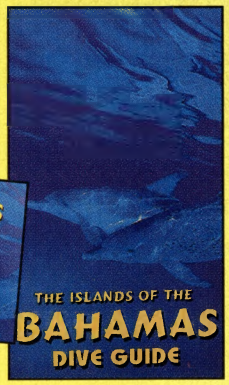

DISCOVER OUR DIVERSITY

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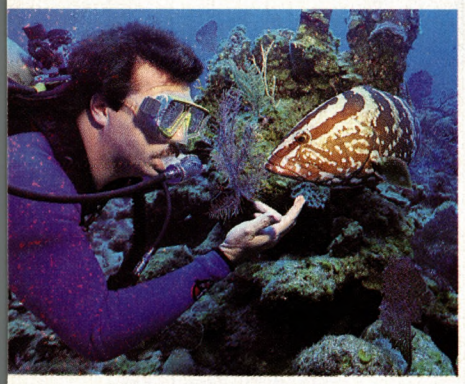
Dive Provo Thrills You with Unspoiled Diving in the Turks & Caicos

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HARRIGAN

When Alan and Clare Jardine became the new managing partners of Dive Provo, they brought a commitment to service divers will love. After a career in diving spanning five years in The Bahamas, six years in Bonaire and four years in the British Virgin Islands, they saw an opportunity at Dive Provo to provide an excellent combination of outstanding service and unspoiled diving. The result is an attitude that says "never say no" to a reasonable request from a customer. It's going over big.



Top: The Turquoise Reef Resort and Casino. Above: Mark Melrose enjoys an encounter with a Nassau Grouper.

PADI FIVE STAR FACILITY

The only PADI Five Star dive operation on Providenciales, in the Turks and Caicos, Dive Provo aims for a standard of quality that should please the most discriminating diver. For instance, special mesh bags are provided for your gear upon check-in. During the rest of your trip, the staff will clean and secure your gear and place it on the correct boat for your next dive.

The boats are outfitted with all the conveniences you would expect, including freshwater showers, marine heads, camera tables and rinse barrels and safety bars with reserve air. The queen of the fleet is a new Pro 42 jet boat, *Provo Explorer*. With 600 hp and a 10 inch draft, this boat can take the most protected route and still get you there fast. The *Provo Star* and *Provo Quest* are about the same size, with more traditional lines. *Provo Explorer* and *Provo Star* tie up at the pier, right in front of the dive shop and hotel. The *Provo Quest* is stationed on the south side of the island, to ensure access to good dive sites in any weather. All of these are big, roomy boats but Dive Provo runs an additional boat anytime the load reaches 15 divers in order to avoid crowding. The normal schedule includes a two tank morning dive, a one tank afternoon dive and night dives on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The destinations of each boat depend primarily on customer requests, taking into account weather conditions.

With all these amenities and seven talented instructors, Dive Provo is an ideal place to get certified. Every course from resort to assistant instructor is available. Dive Provo will start a certification course any day you want. Another convenience is Dive Provo's "Executive Version" of the PADI Open Water course. You can be certified by lunch time on your third day in Provo under this fast track program, which features home study books and two consumer edition videos to give you a head start.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

One of Dive Provo's most exciting trips is the all day, three tank Scuba Safari. They pack the jet boat with sodas and box lunches, load up a limited number of adventurers and head toward West Caicos and French Cay. Both of these uninhabited islands are normally the domain of live-aboards. After two dives at sites already scoped out, everyone hits the beach for lunch. The third dive is exploratory, on some intriguing part of the reef that isn't recorded on anyone's GPS.

By Alan and Clare's reckoning, full service should include snorkeling as well as scuba diving. Their guided snorkel trips aboard *Looking Glass II*, a program run by Jay Stubbs, are very popular with both adults and children. Kevin Roby oversees the photo and video services offered at Dive Provo, providing custom videos, photo/video instruction, camera rentals and E-6 film processing.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

The Turks & Caicos are best known for:

- Healthy reefs
- Bottomless walls
- Pillar Coral
- Excellent visibility

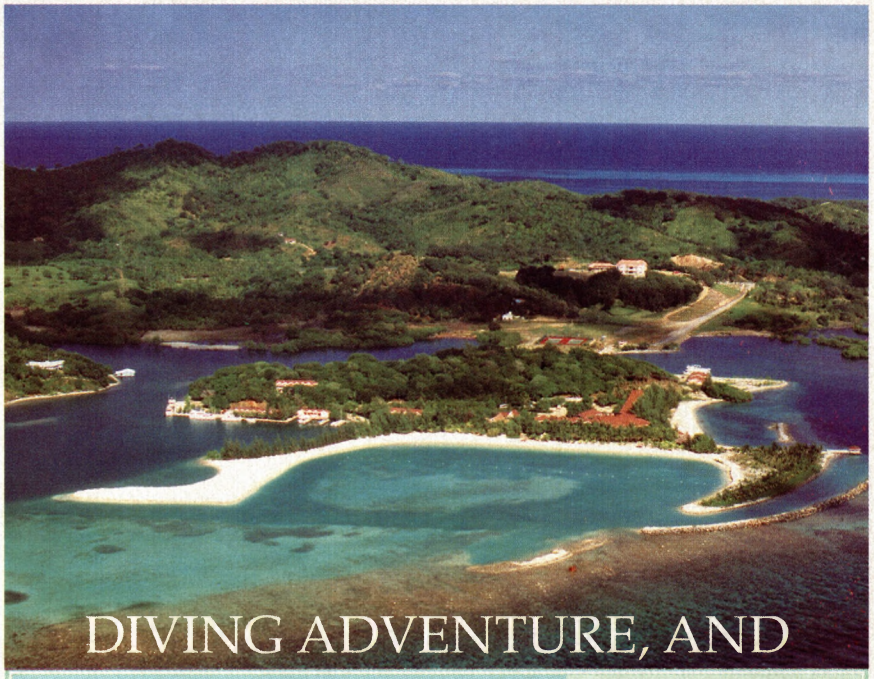
TURKS AND CAICOS DIVING

Healthy reefs, walls that drop from 40 feet straight down to the endless blue and consistently excellent visibility are the hallmarks of Turks and Caicos diving. This is natural diving at its best, with no artificial sweeteners added. Pillar Corals grow as tall as 12 feet off the bottom, undercut ledges are packed with Black Coral and rope sponges weave underwater tapestries of color and life. The edge of the wall is a highway for pelagics and every dive offers the chance to encounter Spotted Eagle Rays, Caribbean Reef Sharks, Hawksbill Turtles and Mantas. With scores of sites at **Grace Bay**, **Pine Cay**, **Northwest Point**, **West Caicos** and **French Cay** there is a rich variety to Turks and Caicos diving.

TURQUOISE REEF RESORT AND CASINO

Great diving is only one-half of a dive vacation; where you sleep and eat completes the equation. Dive Provo is at the luxurious Turquoise Reef Resort and Casino, right in the heart of Grace Bay, where the white sand beach curves for

(Continued on Page 88)



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The Forgotten Paradise of the Solomon Islands

Diving with Bilikiki Cruises

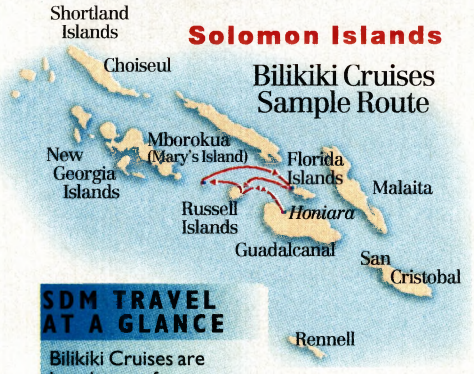
The Spirit of Solomons—*the sister ship of the* Bilikiki.

The Bilikiki*'s pampered guests are surrounded by 125 feet of luxury.*

*A Spine-cheek Anemonefish (*Premnas biaculeatus*) retreats to the safety of its host anemone.*

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

When underwater photographers talk about the Pacific, one name always appears at the top of the wish list—The Solomon Islands. This cluster of more than 900 islands just east of Papua New Guinea is thick with the mystery and excitement of undiscovered diving treasures. In years past, this was the arena for many WW II battles; today these waters offer some of the finest deep walls, current diving, multi-passage caves, sunlit crevices, gently sloping reefs and dense mangrove shorelines in the world. After one short, 10 day trip in this virtually forgotten paradise, we were convinced we had found the ultimate dive location. We swam among large schools of Barracuda and jacks, descended walls covered with massive gorgonians, explored wrecks, snorkeled mangroves and snooped into many of the underwater caves that dot the shoreline. At White Beach, in the Russell Islands, we found and photographed the Spined-Cheek Anemonefish that graces the opposite page of this article. Endemic to the Solomons, the fish is rare; its host—a white anemone—uncommonly seen.



SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Bilikiki Cruises are best known for:

- Uncommon macro life
- WW II wrecks
- Large schools of fish
- Spectacular caves
- Muck dives

Our hostess for our Solomon Islands trip was the luxurious *Bilikiki*, one of two Bilikiki Cruises live-aboards (the other is the *Spirit of the Solomons*).

The diving off both ships is truly a dream. The animal life is so diverse you find something different on each dive. Both ships offer so many sites it's impossible to see them all on one trip. With so many choices, the wear and tear on the reefs is minimized. Plus you never have to dive the same sites twice, although there are some places we could dive forever.

The first stop on our trip was in the Russell Islands, where we dived **White Beach**, near the remains of a loading dock at the end of an old airfield. Over the years, barges, Jeeps, trucks and assorted military equipment have found their eternal homes in the sea here. The dive starts very deep, with a visit to an old WW II truck, then divers follow a gentle slope up to the few remaining pilings of the loading dock. Although in only a few feet of water, the pilings have an incredible variety of animal life attached to them. We saw several lionfish, four types of nudibranchs, soft corals, tunicates, the infamous Archer Fish and several types of small sponges.

Next to the pilings there's a sunken barge so covered with animal life that it looks like a piece of modern art.

Another favorite site in the Russells is **Custom Cave**. The cave starts at the edge of the shoreline and extends back into the island. Intermittent beams of light guide your way. As you swim toward the back of the cave, you will run across pairs of gobies, several types of diurnal and nocturnal shrimp, eels, starfish, colorful sea anemones and a sprinkle of nudibranchs. You eventually reach a point where a large beam of light reaches down from the surface and leads you to an opening in the middle of

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the jungle. For the wide angle photographer, a shot of a model silhouetted against the opening is a must.

Mary's Island is extremely popular because of its diving diversity. If you want schools of Barracuda and jacks galore, you can dive **Barracuda Point**. The dive at the point is a mild drift. Skiffs, called "tinnies," drop you off up current from the schools and you gently drift right into the middle of them. As you round the corner, you can make a short swim back through a clownfish laden area with no current, then back to your point of origin to repeat the dive.

When either Bilikiki Cruises ship is moored at Mary's, you can dive right off the stern to look for the smaller critters. The shoreline is only a few feet away and huge boulders, caves and cracks make this spot a minimal effort/maximum result dive. We made five full dives one day at Mary's, all of which yielded different experiences. Right under the stern we found a three foot long sea cucumber, a moray eel, a three inch cowry, several nudibranchs and a very friendly cuttlefish.

As we moved to the **Florida Islands**, the managers informed us we were going to dive **Velvia Reef**. As we neared the 30 to 40 foot mound it looked drab and barren. However, as we got within a few feet of the bottom, we came face to face with so many colorful nudibranchs, fish, octopus and cuttlefish that we were firing our cameras faster than our strobes could recycle. Not surprisingly, everyone wanted to make a second dive on the same spot and so we did. The Bilikiki Cruises folks aim to please!

Our last two dives in the Floridas were **Twin Tunnels** and the **Muck Dive**. Twin Tunnels starts on the top of a pinnacle and stretches down toward the sides. It then bends out to the wall to meet large schools of fish. The Muck Dive is more of a muck, WW II wreck, wide angle, macro, old pier, fun dive. It has something for everyone. The highlight of this dive was discovering the remains of a Japanese float plane in just 15 feet of water. Although its wings and engine are broken off, the main fuselage is a haven for fish and corals.

The *Bilikiki* and *Spirit of Solomons* are owned by Rick and Jane Belmare, along with Rodger and Janita Radford. Their home port is Honiara, the capital city of the Solomon Islands. In operation since 1989, the *Bilikiki* is considered one of the world's best live-aboards. Owing to the increasing popularity of diving the Solomons, the *Bilikiki* couldn't handle all the demand for charters so a sister ship, the *Spirit of Solomons*, was added in 1992. Both are 125 feet in length, three

GETTING THERE

From the U.S., the first stop enroute to the Solomon Islands is usually Fiji. At present, there are several major airlines offering service for this leg of the journey. The flight from Nadi, Fiji to Honiara is best handled by the

country's local carrier—Solomon Airlines. Flights are also available to many of the remote outer islands. Total in-flight time is approximately 17 hours.

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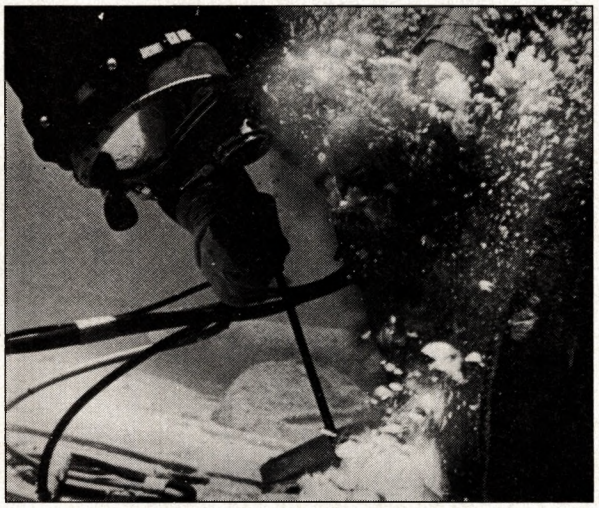

Photo by: Mike Massey, DIT

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SCOTT NEALE • 5/96
"Thanks to Willy and all the staff for putting me in touch with Oceaneering International. I've learned so much!"

JEFF HAZLETT • 1/96
"Working for Rust Utilities, Still having fun diving, lots of travel, mostly diving in nuclear plants. I should be going to Japan in the fall - can't wait. Thanks for the training."

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decks high, 24 feet wide and were designed with diving in mind.

Diving from either boat is simple and easy. Whenever possible, the boats use mooring lines so you can access the dive sites via the swim platform. If that's not possible, then the tinnies are used. These 21 foot long aluminum boats have special benches designed for divers and camera pads for photographic equipment. The tanks and gear are loaded in advance and secured in a hole in the bench. When you reach the dive spot, the tenders help you put on your gear and hand you your camera once you are in the water. When you have about 80 percent of your air consumed, just ascend and the skiff will pick you up.

The two boats are similar but each has her own distinct amenities. The *Bilikiki* has a crew of 11 and two managers who work hard to spoil you rotten. There are 10 air-conditioned cabins below decks, each with private shower, toilet, double bed and a single bed above. Each room is spacious and well designed for comfort. There are reading lamps above each bed, storage space below the double bed and quick access to the mid-deck.

A covered dining area—where most of the meals are served—is in the forward section of the mid-deck. A variety of European, island and American foods are prepared in the main galley. Fresh fruit and vegetables are purchased daily from friendly villagers en route. The salon

TRAVEL TIPS

Currency: $1 S.I. = $8 U.S. (approx.)

Entry Requirements: U.S. passport, no visa required. $40 departure tax must be paid in local currency.

Tipping: Not customary

Climate: Air temperatures during the day range from 82 to 88°F. The Solomon Islands lie just below the equator, so bring plenty of sunscreen.

Water temperatures range from 80 to 85°F thus dive skins are good year-round.

Attire: Lightweight casual clothes, with suitable sun protection. Women should bring clothing that covers their shoulders and knees for village visits.

Health: The Solomon Islands are a malaria area, so contact your doctor at least two weeks before your trip to obtain the appropriate medications.

SOLOMON ISLANDS INFORMATION

Bilikiki Cruises
(800) 663-5363
(604) 383-7253
Web Site: http://www.3routes.com /scuba/bilikiki.html
E-mail: bilikiki@horizon.bc.ca

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BILIKIKI CRUISES

is the perfect spot to get drinks from the bar, relax and read a book or view a video in the multi-format video system.

The dive tanks and equipment preparation benches wrap around the swim platform. A large double deck camera table with a nonskid surface is in the middle of the dive deck for easy camera access. Two hot showers and a camera rinse tank are at the front of the dive deck, making your post dive activities very comfortable.

When you want to lounge around and read a book or get some sun, climb to the upper deck. There you will find several lounge chairs and an extensive library.

Since so many divers today have taken up underwater photography, a photo room was specially designed. The room features a battery charging station, some repair tools and E-6 film processing.

The *Spirit of Solomons* has 10 staterooms below decks. Four are private cabins with private baths; six are twin cabins that share two toilets and three showers. Each cabin is spacious with plenty of room for storage. One floor up you'll find three deluxe staterooms mid-deck. The staterooms offer *Spirit*'s best accommodations.

The dive briefings and gear preparation take place on the forward dive deck. Cameras are stored on the large camera table and you can rinse them in the large camera rinse tank after your dive. There is a stern swimstep and hot water showers outside provide the perfect end to a great dive.

The lounge is right behind the dive deck, featuring an area to read, watch videotapes or relax in the evening. The galley serves the same type of European, island and American food as the *Bilikiki*. The spacious covered dining area is at the stern of the upper deck and allows incredible views of the islands while you dine. The forward sundeck provides an ideal setting for sunbathing between dives.

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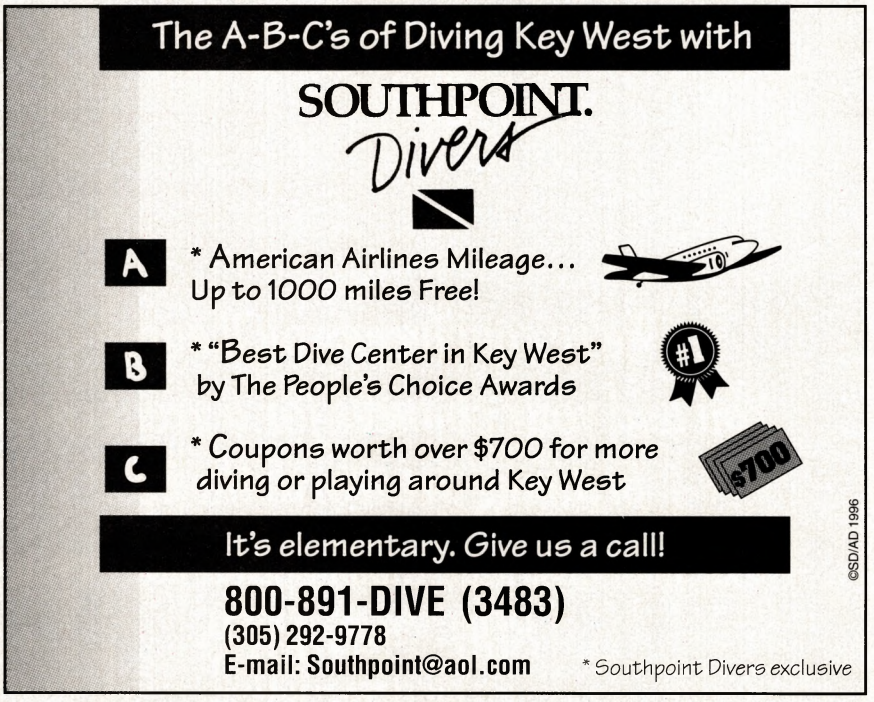

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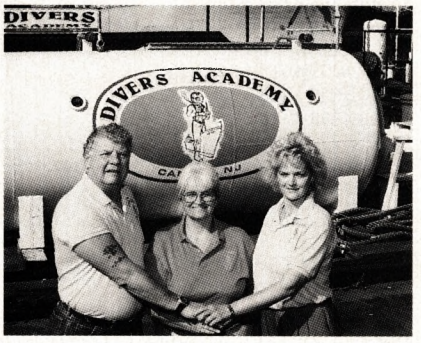
DIVER'S ACADEMY

(Continued from Page 16)

river bottom varies from hard to muddy. They will tell you they do not have training tanks and training conditions are not Caribbean-like, they are real—the kind found every day by commercial divers.

Divers Academy of the Eastern Seaboard is in the Port of Philadelphia in Camden, New Jersey, at the South Jersey Port Shipping Terminal. The school was founded in 1977 by Captain William Brown, a commercial diver who



The Brown family, from left to right: William, Sharon and Tamara.

knew what it took to turn out quality commercial divers. Captain Brown has turned over the reins of the company to his daughter, Tamara Brown. Raised in the industry, she is a graduate of Divers Academy and started her career there.

Ms. Brown, the president of Divers Academy, has one driving goal: to turn out the best entry level commercial diver possible. All of her energy is directed to that end. She expects no less from her office staff and instructors.

Divers Academy is much more than a

group of individuals training entry level commercial diving students. The entire staff works as one entity to produce an entry level diver who can work safely and efficiently with a wide array of job skills. The school's diversity is evident in its curriculum. Students undertake a 20 week, 720 hour course. Classes are held Mondays to Thursdays from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm and from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm on Fridays. The curriculum includes diving physics and physiology, decompression treatment and treatment tables, first aid and CPR, deep sea diving techniques and procedures, commercial scuba, underwater demolition, salvage, seamanship, bridge inspection, mixed gas diving (both chamber and open water), hot water systems, safety standards, hyperbaric chamber operations, U/W photography and video, employment opportunities, the offshore diving industry, the inland diving industry and the use of tools.

Divers Academy could stop right there and still provide you with the knowledge needed for a solid career. To make you an even better diver, however, they make sure you receive training in other important facets of commercial diving. These are not elective courses but part of the entire package. The school contracts with Krautkramer Branson, Inc., a well known and well-respected non-destructive testing (NDT) educator and NDT aerospace technology center, to provide a Level 1 NDT certification course. The students use state of the art equipment to learn ultrasonic testing operations, detectability and inspection techniques, alternate inspection techniques and thickness gauging. This is a skill that has solid potential above water as well as below. Remote operated vehicle (ROV) operation and basic troubleshooting procedures are learned using the school's Sea Otter ROV. The welding and cutting course includes 40 hours of topside training before students begin to cut and weld underwater. Added training includes an extended rigging course, additional inland inspection training, an introduction to Hazmat (Hazardous Material) training and penetration training projects.

Tamara Brown discussed the industry and her thoughts about Divers Academy: "The industry is booming, better than it was in the '80s. The reasons include increased regulations and standards, pier restorations, power plant work and work resulting from natural disasters. An example of disaster work is the aftermath of floods, the most common cause of bridge failures...Depending on the severity, some bridges are closed until an inspection is done. Natural disaster inspections are in addition to normal bridge inspections, which

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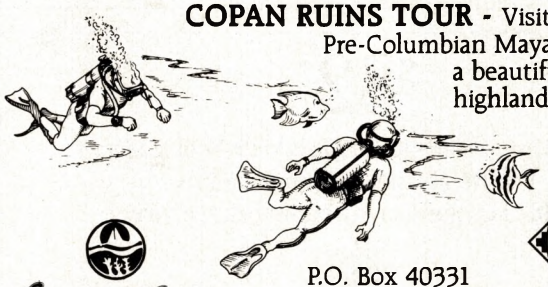

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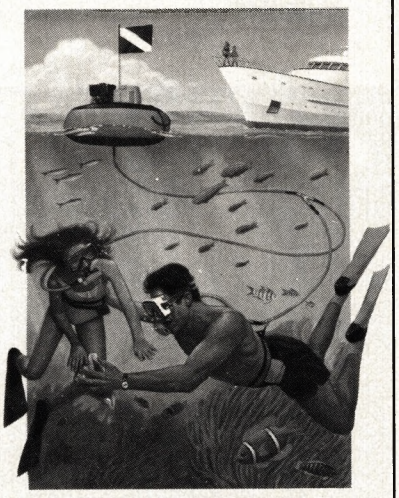

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have tripled in the last few years. Waste water treatment plants provide plenty of work for commercial divers with internal and external outfall pipe inspections....Even the work in the gulf oil rigs has increased. Right now is a great time for commercial divers and I don't see it ending anytime soon."

Brown continued, "At Divers Academy, we are trying to protect the industry and the interests of the diver. We are here to train students to become safe working divers. That means having the proper education. Contractors want divers with the most training possible. It is important that students go to the proper schools, the schools the industry recognizes. That's where Divers Academy fits in. We are accredited by the Association of Commercial Diving Educators (ACDE), licensed by the State Department of Education and have Federal accreditation from the Accrediting Commission of the Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT). We are also a member of the Association of Diving Contractors, Inc. (ADC)."

To become a student at Divers Academy, you must be at least 18 years of age, have a high school diploma, GED or pass an ability to benefit test, pass a medical examination given by the doctor of their choice, have good mechanical ability, be a competent swimmer and have a desire to succeed. Don't let age discourage you from becoming a commercial diver. Divers Academy has students in their current class that are in their middle to late 40s. The key to succeeding as you get older is being in excellent physical condition. You must supply a wet or drysuit, mask, snorkel, fins, weightbelt and safety gear (hardhat, boots and gloves). To ease the financial burden, Divers Academy participates in a number of financial assistance plans. These include the Stafford Student Loan (GSL), Supplemental Loan to Independent Students (SLS), Loan to Parents (PLUS), the Pell Grant and Veterans Education Assistance.

Housing for Divers Academy students is arranged at a reasonable cost in private homes in suburban Camden County or in private apartments, depending on each student's needs. The private residences include completely furnished rooms with full house privileges and all utilities except telephone.

The school's administrative staff, teaching staff, classrooms, workshops, changing rooms and equipment lockers are in a two story brick building on the waterfront. Their workboat, the *Bulldog II*, a 48 foot long twin screw steel pushboat with a 20 foot beam, is alongside the pier behind the main building. It has three dive stations that can be used as staging centers for underwater projects. A 17 by 22 foot double lock stationary hyperbaric chamber, a portable double lock hyperbaric chamber, 400 amp and 500 amp welders and air compressors are found dockside. There is a 36 by 38 foot barge in a slip adjacent to the main building, adding nine additional training stations. The water depth at all stations ranges between 44 and 50 feet, depending on tidal conditions. Water temperatures vary according to the season. In midsummer, bottom temperatures can reach the low 70s (°F) while winter temperatures can be a bone chilling 35°F.

Divers Academy will help students find jobs upon graduation. Its current placement rate is 98 percent. Tamara Brown elaborated, "I am very proud of our placement rate. It has stayed the same even as our student base has increased....We base our placement rate on verified employment information."

An important factor for anyone considering a new career is earning potential. Entry level commercial divers can

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expect to earn between $18,000 and $35,000 a year. During the first year on the job, expect to make between $18,000 and $25,000. Salary increases afterward should average $10,000 to $15,000 a year. Top salary ranges could be $50,000 to $80,000 or more. Performance and work attitude play an important role in advancement and increased income.

The reasons students choose Divers Academy include real life training conditions, a complete program, experienced instructors, the training time frame and the cost. Divers Academy's reputation is made by their graduates and that is important for a continuing student referral from both graduates and the industry. The school's referral rate is 35 to 40 percent—an impressive figure.

Remember their motto: "If you can do it in the Delaware, you can do it anywhere." To enroll or to receive more information, contact the professionals at the Divers Academy of the Eastern Seaboard, Inc., 2500 Broadway, Camden, New Jersey 08104; (800) 238-DIVE, fax (609) 541-4355. You can visit their Web Site at **http: //www.diversacademy.com** or join them on the first Saturday of each month at an open house where you can meet the staff and the students for a first hand experience of the exciting world of commercial diving.

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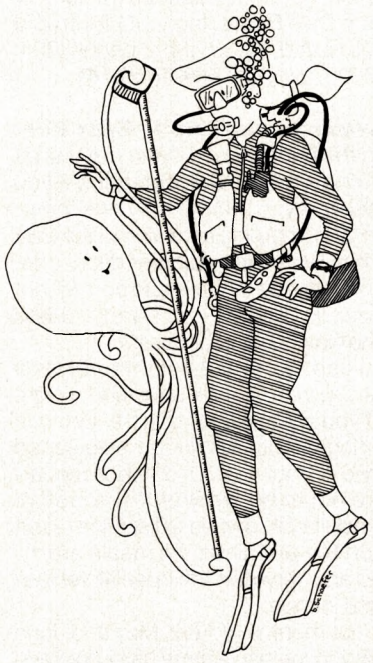

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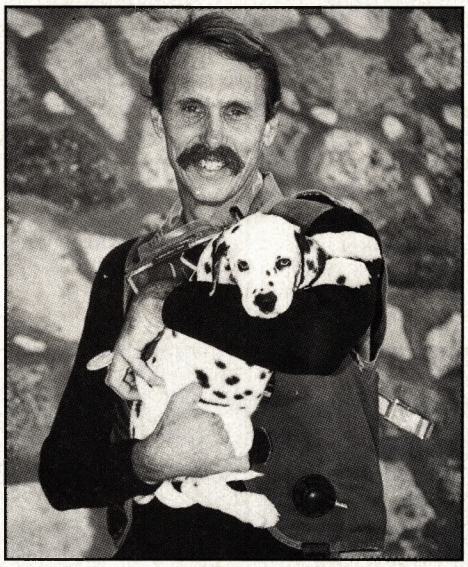

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Dive Notes

NIKON PRODUCT GUIDE: The new, all-inclusive 1996-97 Nikon Full Line Product Guide is an invaluable resource, incorporating Nikon's vast and growing product lines in an eye catching and informative manner. The guide features Nikon's Total Imaging System photographic products as well as other Nikon products, such as scanners for digital imaging, eyewear and sport optics.

The 116 page glossy, full color magazine contains vivid photos and complete product descriptions and specifications for all current 35mm, Advanced Photo System and digital Nikon SLRs and point and shoot cameras, lenses and accessories, along with Nikon binoculars, sunglasses and film and flatbed scanners.

In addition, the guide includes information on other Nikon services designed to advance the user's photographic knowledge and skills, such as the highly-regarded Nikon School of Photography, Nikon World Portfolio magazine and Nikon School video instructional tapes.

The product guide is available free of charge by calling (800) NIKON-35. For more information on Nikon products, visit Nikon Inc.'s Web Site at http://www.nikonusa.com.

CUSTOM DIVE BOATS NEW PRO 48: Custom Dive Boats, Inc., of DeLand, Florida, has a new Pro 48, with all fiberglass and composite construction, an imposing 16 foot beam and overall length of 48 feet. The Pro 48 can easily accommodate 30 divers. The triple engine jet package will allow the boat to reach cruising speeds of 30 knots. Combined with a fuel capacity of 450 gallons and a 24 inch draft, the Pro 48 will enable dive operators to take large groups to remote sites with speed and comfort. The Pro 48 can be seen in operation at Lahaina Divers, Maui, Hawaii.

Since 1992, Custom Dive Boats, Inc., has been building quality boats specifically for the diving industry. With the Pro 42, Pro 48 and Pro 51, Custom Dive Boats can meet the needs of your diving operation. For more information, contact Custom Dive Boats, Inc., 1416 Intrepid Drive, DeLand, FL 32724 or phone (904) 738-7300; fax (904) 738-4455.

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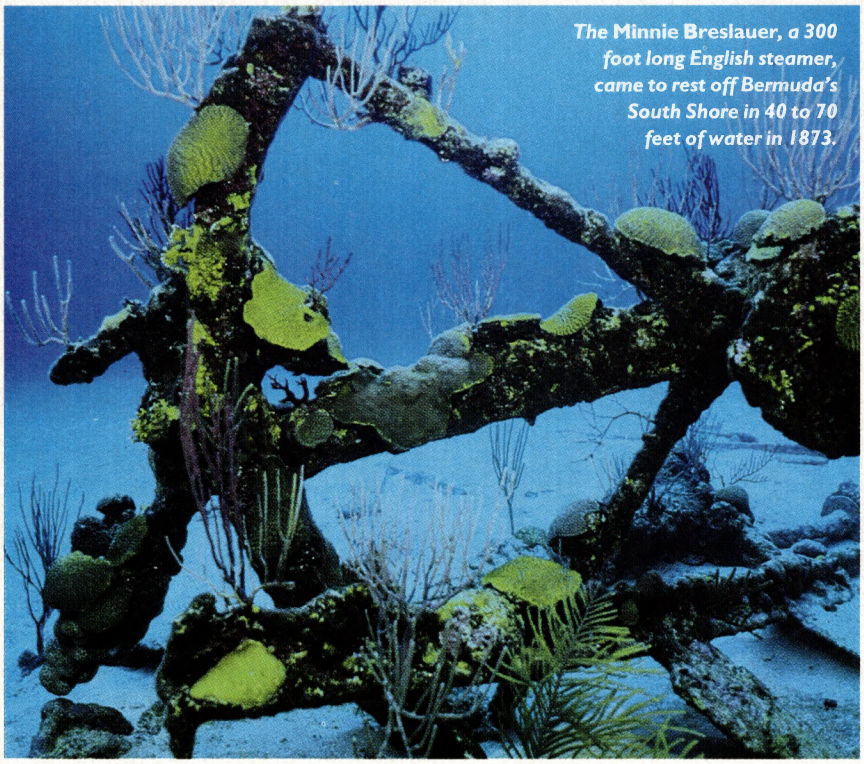
The Minnie Breslauer

Bermuda's Unluckiest Ship

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

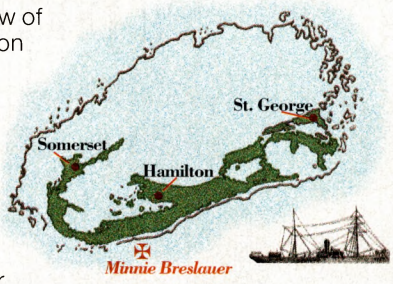


The Minnie Breslauer, a 300 foot long English steamer, came to rest off Bermuda's South Shore in 40 to 70 feet of water in 1873.

The *Minnie Breslauer* was one of those unlucky ships that give insurance underwriters gray hair. She sank on her maiden voyage, on New Year's Day in 1873! Constructed of the finest materials available, this 300 foot long English steamer was built and launched toward the end of 1872.

Bound for New York she departed Portugal with an assorted cargo of cork, lead ingots, dried fruit and wine. The captain and his crew of 24 were in good spirits on this transatlantic voyage.

Intending to use Bermuda as a landmark, the captain edged his new ship close to the island's South Shore. He did not have the appropriate navigation chart and was unfamiliar with the waters. Cruis- ing at full speed, the ill-fated ship rammed into a submerged reef one mile offshore, causing the bow section of the hull to collapse. Not realizing the extent of the damage, the captain tried to back his ship off the reef—and it began sinking immediately.



Today, the giant shipwreck is off Bermuda's South Shore, not far from the Southampton Princess Hotel beach. She lies on her starboard side, with her crumpled bow at 40 feet and her stern against the flat sand bottom at 70 feet. After more than 224 years of saltwater submersion, this steel hulled freighter is heavily overgrown with dome corals, sea-whips and colorful sponges.

A huge steam boiler sits amidships, providing an excellent point of reference while exploring this wreck. Much of the ship is a jumble of steel beams, deck plates, bulkheads and machinery—yet the ship's structure is still recognizable. Forward of the boiler is a pile of lead ingots pinned under steel plates.

The most interesting portion of this wreck is the stern, where you can penetrate the interior and shoot photographs among the steel beams. The ship's giant four bladed propeller is intact and partially buried in the sand. The great rudder is also there. Perhaps the most interesting artifact is the ship's steering quadrant—an odd shaped metal device that allowed the ship's rudder to be moved by a steering lever.

Underwater visibility in this area ranges from good to excellent. The day we dived the *Minnie Breslauer* the visibility was at least 100 feet. This wreck site is popular because of its proximity to three Bermuda dive operators and because visitors receive a Bermuda Shipwreck Certificate upon completing this dive.

BERMUDA DIVE OPERATORS

The *Minnie Breslauer* is just one of dozens of Bermuda wrecks awaiting exploration. If you are interested in diving them, contact any of the following dive operators:

Blue Water Divers Co., Ltd.
P.O. Box SN 165
Southampton SN BX, Bermuda
(441) 234-1034
(441) 234-3561 (fax)

Fantasea Diving
Darrell's Wharf
1 Harbour Road
Paget PG 01, Bermuda
(888) Do A Dive
(441) 236-6339
(441) 236-8926 (fax)

Nautilus Diving, Ltd.
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Hamilton HM AX, Bermuda
(441) 238-2332
(441) 295-9485
(441) 234-5180 (fax)

Scuba Look
Grotto Bay Beach Hotel
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Warwick WK BX, Bermuda
(441) 293-7319
(441) 295-2421 (fax)

South Side Scuba
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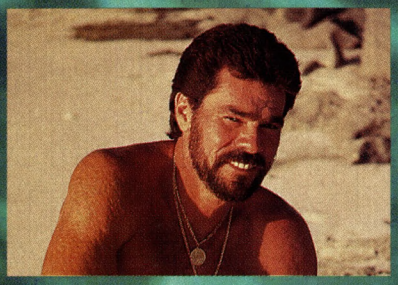

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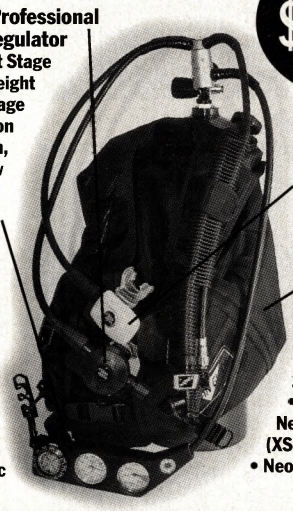

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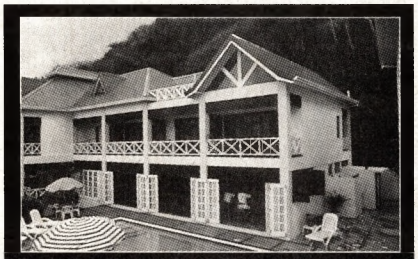

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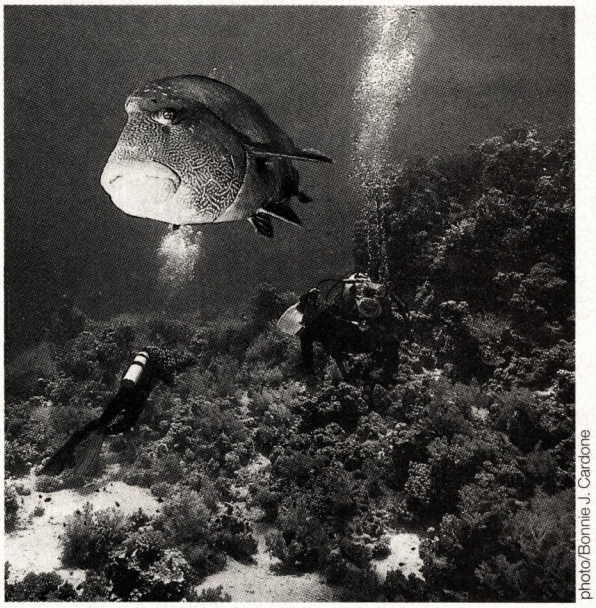
Diving for Seniors


photo/Bonnie J. Cardone

BY FRED BOVE, M.D., PH.D.

The inevitability of aging ultimately becomes apparent to divers. As time goes on, we need to consider the changes that occur and modify our diving to accommodate reduced physical conditioning, development of chronic illness and less mobility of muscles and joints. Some scientists suggest the risk of decompression sickness increases in older divers. The increased incidence of heart disease in older individuals should also suggest caution in divers who are more than 50. While there are some limitations to diving in older individuals, there are many divers above the age of 60 who are diving safely.

NORMAL CHANGES WITH AGING

The body systems that change with age and are of direct concern to divers are the central nervous system, the lungs, the heart and the musculo-skeletal system.

Changes in the central nervous system that can affect diving performance have mostly to do with a generalized slowing of reflexes and fine muscle coordination. These changes are usually of little consequence in sport diving but should be considered when planning dives that may require intense physical exertion.

The oxygen transport capacity of the lungs may be reduced with age but the changes are usually not enough to cause evident limitations in sport diving. The increased stiffness of the lungs with age can contribute to limitations of exercise capacity, particularly with increased intensity. This limit is usually not a concern but might compromise safety if extreme exercise is needed to avoid a dangerous diving situation.

The heart and circulation are affected in several ways with age. Disease of blood vessels (atherosclerosis) increases with age. Risk factors that contribute to premature atherosclerosis include cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

In women, the risk of atherosclerosis increases after menopause. Women also are at an increased risk for heart disease over 60.

In men, the risk of heart disease increases at about 50 years of age. If you are in good physical condition and are over 50, you are not likely to have a problem with diving. If you are not in good condition or have one or more of the risk factors mentioned above, you should consider having a physical evaluation, including a stress test, before learning to dive. Disease of blood vessels can also affect arteries to the brain and increase the risk of stroke. Similarly, narrowed arteries in the legs can cause weakening of the legs and limit exercise capacity. As we learn more about the causes of atherosclerosis, it has become possible

(Continued on Page 147)

TOBAGO

DIVE GUIDE

Dive Tobago's Drifts...

Other destinations may offer drift dives, but none can match the awesome underwater display of Tobago's "Drifts." The diversity of abundant marine life and prolific reefs are a direct result of Tobago's unique location in the midst of converging ocean currents. Teeming with fish fed by nutrient rich waters, the activity beneath the surface forms a sharp contrast with the topside tranquility. Divers may drift effortlessly with the current and witness what is reputed to be the Caribbean's largest brain coral, beautiful coral gardens filled with reef fish, magnificent seascapes, and the spectacle of Tobago's majestic manta rays. Unlike shifting attractions, the ever-changing Drifts are always there to inspire and thrill experienced and beginning divers alike who seek the ultimate U/W adventure. When diving in Tobago, the secret is to go with the flow and enjoy the unforgettable ride!

The quiet island of Tobago is nestled in the extreme southeastern corner of the Caribbean, just 70 miles off the coast of South America. Rising from the outer edge of South America's continental shelf, Tobago lies in the pathway of intersecting ocean currents. Two of the currents, the North Equatorial Current coming in from the open Atlantic and the Guyana Current from the Orinoco River in South America, are the main reasons Tobago has such an overwhelming abundance of marine life and prolific growth in its reefs. These currents or Drifts bring the nutrients and conditions that draw mantas and other large pelagics close to the reef.

One of the attractions of Tobago's Drifts is the resident population of Atlantic manta rays. Although rare throughout the rest of the Caribbean and the Bahamas, there are fairly dependable sightings from late April through September, especially in the Speyside area. Yet these majestic creatures represent only one of the many unique features of Tobago's Drifts.

leatherback turtles in the Caribbean. The nesting season runs from March through June (primarily from Great Courland Bay to Turtle Beach on the leeward coast). One can even sign up for organized turtle watches. When a turtle is sighted, night watchmen will call the people on the list, allowing them to come and observe the action from a respectful distance. It is remarkable to watch these six foot, 1000 pound creatures haul themselves laboriously up the beach, dig nests and lay their eggs in the dark.

The rainforest cloaking the island's main ridge was declared a legal preserve on April 13, 1776. Birdwatchers will revel in the variety and abundance of land, wading and sea birds. Watch for the red-billed tropic bird as well as colonies of brown boobies and sooty terns. The road over the hill from Speyside to Charlotteville is prime territory for sightings of parrots and other exotics; more than 210 species of birds are represented on the island.

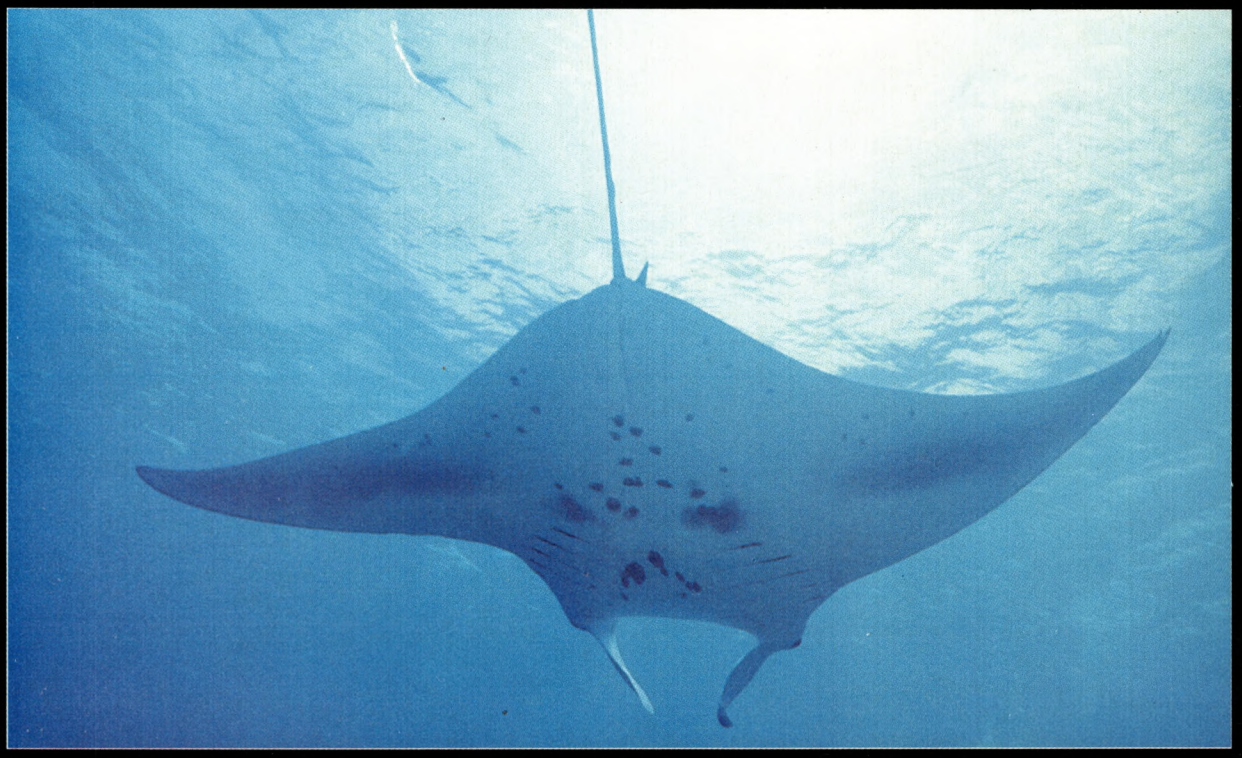
In many ways Tobago's Drifts mirror the island's rich topside beauty. The people are friendly and the land unspoiled, the way the Caribbean used to be. To enjoy the abundance and diversity both above and below the surface, the secret is to relax, go with the flow and take time to savor what the island and Tobago's Drifts have to offer.

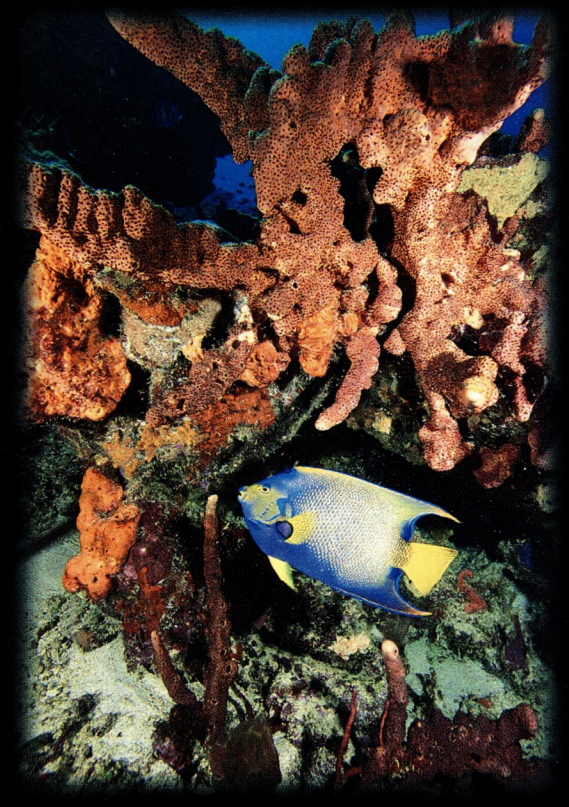
Dive Tobago's Drift Certificate Program

Now you can take home a certificate as a memento of your diving experiences in Tobago. The Tobago dive operators, in cooperation with the Tobago Department of Tourism (TIDCO), are offering—absolutely free—a beautifully designed certificate printed on parchment-like paper and suitable for framing. The certificate documents your diving on eight of Tobago's Drifts and provides a summary of Tobago's drift diving.

The rules for the program are simple: Come to Tobago and stay at any hotel or inn of your choice. Dive with one of the members of the Association of Tobago Dive Operators and complete 8 of Tobago's Drifts. You will receive a signed certificate documenting your experience.

For your safety and enjoyment, environmental conditions will determine the choice of dive sites.





wealth of top dive sites. **Cathedral**, with its incredibly thick collection of sponges and soft corals, as well as immense heads of brain coral (seven to eight feet across) is the center point between two levels of diving: highly skilled and moderately experienced. Encountering current in these waters is a given. Beginning with an easy one-quarter knot, they can at times crank up from two to four knots between Little Tobago and Goat Island.

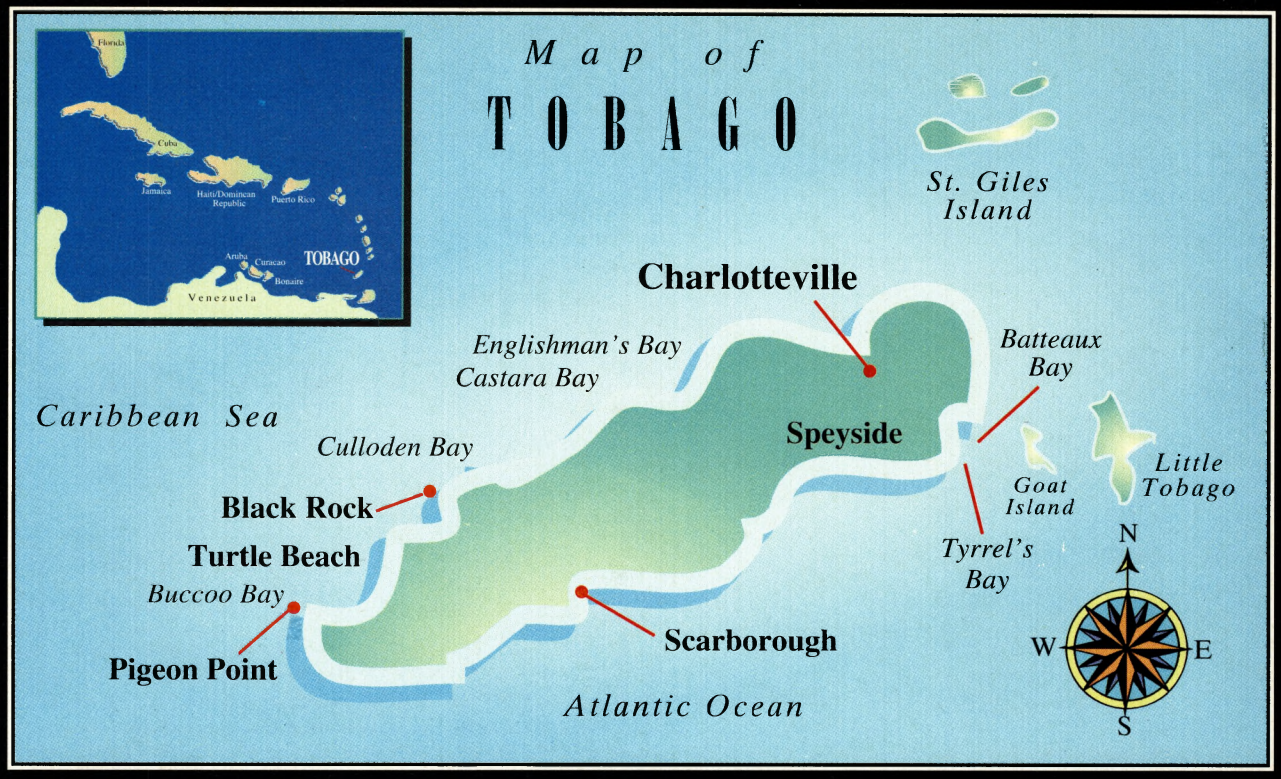
Bookends is another outstanding site. The dive begins near two rocks protruding from the water. Long swells coming from the Atlantic crash against the sides, creating a thick layer of aerated water. From underwater, this appears as a line of storm clouds moving in around the peaks of two mountains. Within "the clouds" lives a school of tarpon creating a surreal effect.

Shark Bank and **Special** are two other volcanic spires close to Bookends. With their summits breaking the surface, the underwater topography consists of rocky slopes laden with forests of soft corals and sponges. And, of course, there is plenty of fish life, including mantas, turtles, sharks, tuna, large mackerel and barracuda. Other formations include **John Rock** with its canyons and turtles, **Keleston Drain** with the Superdome, and **Japanese Gardens**, with its thrilling currents and more. Each site offers dramatic formations, a chance to observe pelagics and a good ride in Tobago's Drifts. Enjoy the ride!

The Island

Tobago is a place of natural beauty. The mountainous island is covered with large forests of palm trees, which give Tobago a look more reminiscent of the South Pacific than the Caribbean. In addition to offering fantastic diving on colorful, healthy reefs, it also presents a full range of natural encounters on land. There are nesting leatherback turtles during the spring, bush hikes through the rainforest, some of the finest birdwatching opportunities in the Caribbean, waterfalls and a wealth of other natural activities.

Tobago has one of the largest nesting populations of



We've got the brains as well as the beauty...

Through the billowing clouds of Creole wrasse, damselfish, rainbow runners, black jacks and chromis, there are tarpon, black grouper, cubera snappers, turtles and spotted eagle rays. The backdrop for this marine fairyland is characterized by the plentiful growth of soft corals and yellow, red, purple and green sponges; their shapes and sizes sculpted by the currents. A particular site which should not be missed is Keleston Drain, home of the "Superdome"—the largest specimen of brain coral in the Caribbean!

Due to the unusual conditions, most dives are drift dives with a divemaster carrying a surface marker. Separated into small groups, divers follow the divemaster closely but in a loose group. A Scuba Sausage or Scuba Tuba (an inflatable tube about six feet long) is recommended as a safety precaution, as is a loud whistle.

Dive Sites

There are many dive sites surrounding Tobago and the intensity of the Drifts vary with the location; this enables beginners as well as experienced divers to enjoy Tobago's Drifts.

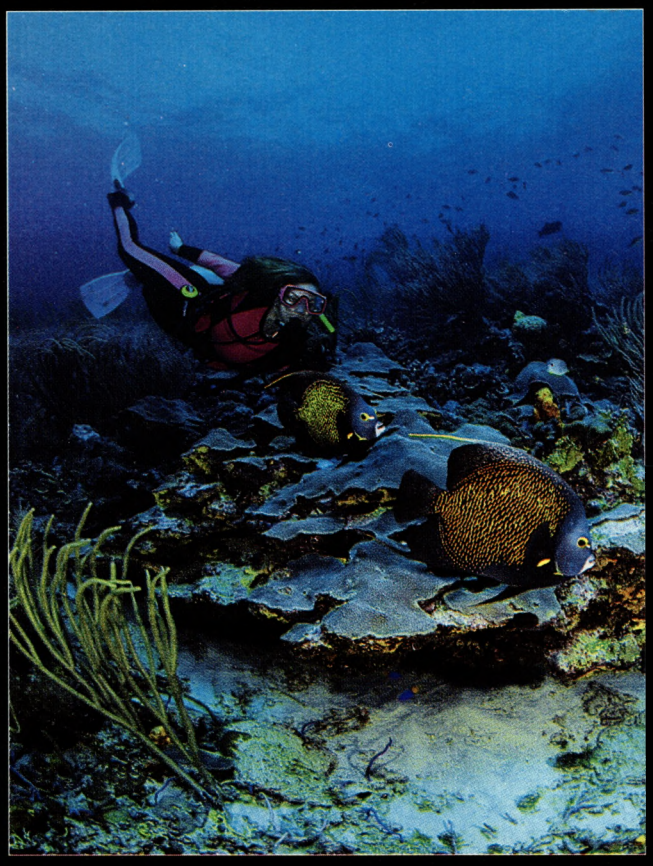
One of the primary west end dive areas for the experienced diver is **The Shallows**. This huge plateau offers depths ranging from 50 feet to more than 100 on the edges. Currents are ever-present. While there are some informal names for different segments of The Shallows, the area is usually referred to as a whole. The bottom terrain consists of a calcareous limestone with low-lying, heavily encrusted outcroppings. The sponges and deepwater seafans and gorgonians are shaped and formed by the currents, much like trees or other terrestrial plants on a wind-swept plain.

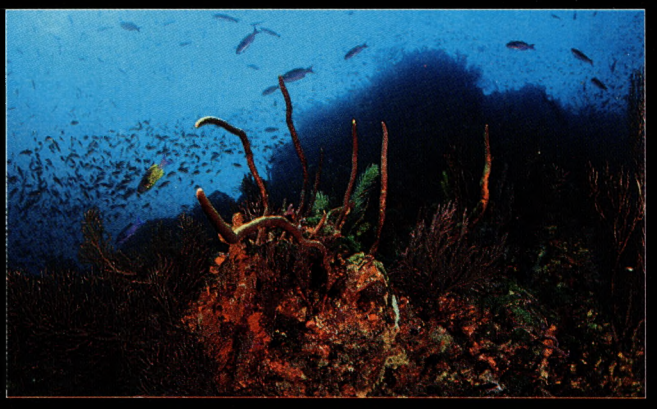
The northern shoreline offers very mild Drifts. Typical sites include protected bays such as **Mt. Irvine Wall**. Ranging in depth from 30 to 60 feet, this mini-wall provides exchanges with a combination of open water critters, such as spotted eagle rays or pompano, interspersed with lush invertebrate life. **Arnos Vale** is highly regarded for its eel population, including the relatively uncommon spotted snake eel and lesser electric ray. Other mild Drifts on the Caribbean side of the island include **Englishman's Bay**, **Culloden Bay** and **Castara Bay**.

Larger than life, **Sisters** is a series of rock, coral encrusted pinnacles rising up from the deep. Because of its distance from shore, the chance of encounters with large pelagics such as turtles, sharks and eagle rays are common.

Just off the east end of Tobago are several islands and pinnacles, collectively referred to as **The Giles**. The primary island is St. Giles, a popular site for blue water fishing. One of the best sites is **London Bridge**, a rocky arch protruding from the water. Underwater, the formation consists of tunnels, walls and canyons. As at other offshore sites, London Bridge always presents the possibility of encounters with large pelagics.

At the heart of Tobago's finest diving is the small community of Speyside in the north-east. Just offshore, one finds two small islands: Goat Island and Little Tobago. Here, Tobago's Drifts run in all their glory and provide a





TRAVEL INFORMATION

How To Get There: American Airlines and BWIA offer air service from major gateway cities in the U.S. For more information on air/hotel/dive packages, contact any of the Tobago dive operators.

Climate: Tobago enjoys a year-round tropical climate of 84° to 86°F in the summer, occasionally dipping into the 70s during the winter. Water temperatures generally average in the low 80s year-round. Despite its fortunate location south of the hurricane belt, there is a rainy season which typically runs July through September, which also happens to coincide with part of Tobago's manta season.

Dress: Lightweight, casual clothing is appropriate for all occasions. Good walking shoes are recommended.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport and return ticket are necessary for entry into Tobago. Departure taxes and security fees total approximately $15 U.S. ($85TT) and are collected at the airport.

Car Rental and Taxi: Upon arriving in Tobago, you can rent a car from any of the agencies at the airport or also arrange to rent a car through your hotel. Taxi service is also available. As with any country or city, ask what the fare will be before you get into the taxi.

ACCOMODATIONS

Blue Waters Inn
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Tel: (809) 660-4341
Fax: (809) 660-5195

Manta Lodge Resort
Speyside, Tobago
Tel: 1-(800)-544-7631
Tel: (809) 660-5268
Fax: (809) 660-5030

Man-O-War Bay Cottages
Charlotteville Estate, Tobago
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Fax: (809) 660-4328

Ocean Point Holiday Resort
Milford Road, Tobago
Tel/Fax: (809) 639-0973

Rex Turtle Beach Resort
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Tel: 1-(800)-668-1775
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Spence's Terrace
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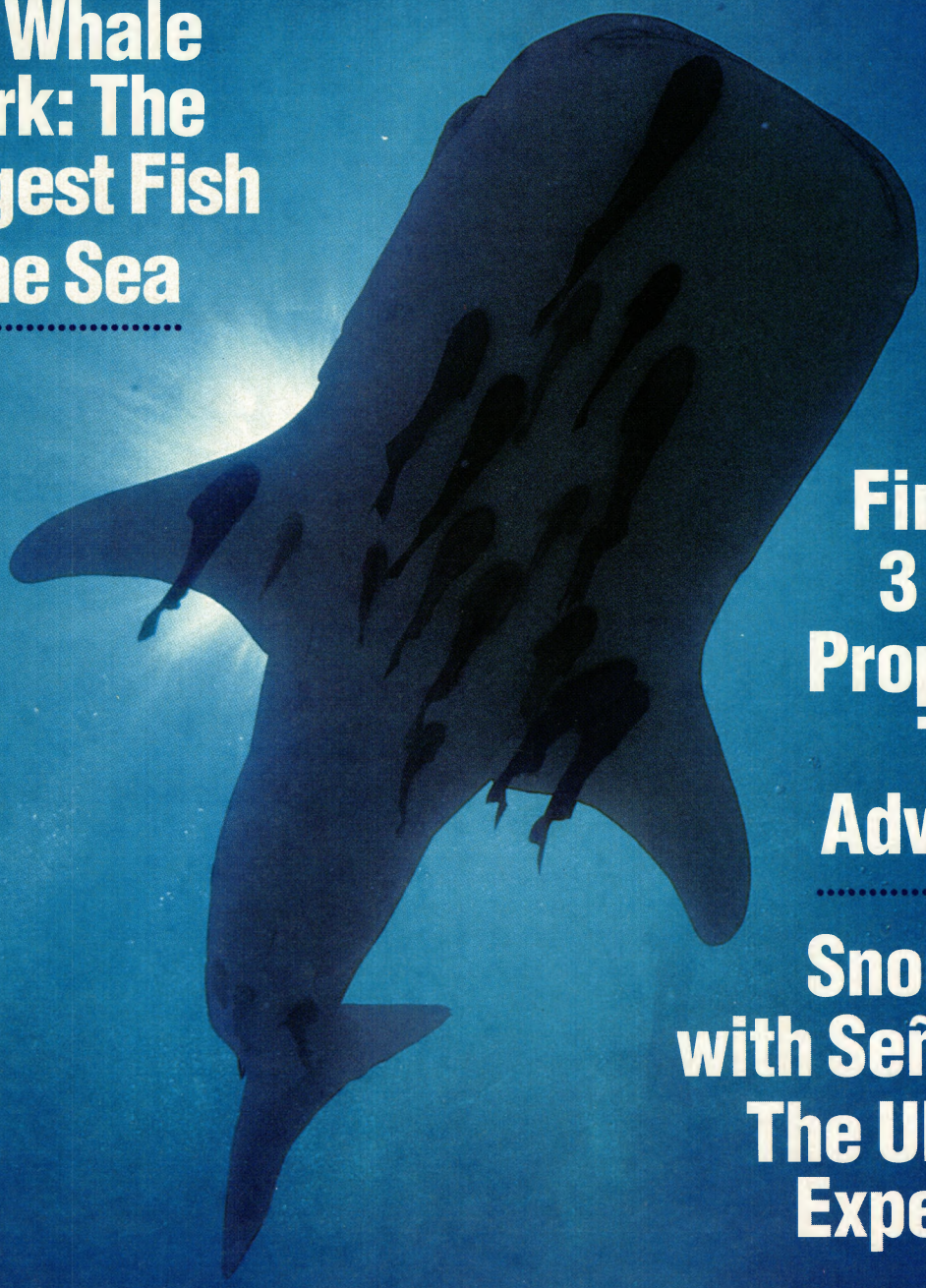
SNORKELING

TOURBOOK

The Whale Shark: The Biggest Fish in the Sea

Fin-esse: 3 Fins to Propel You Toward Adventure

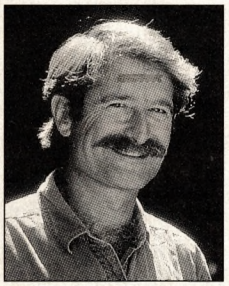
Snorkeling with Señor Big: The Ultimate Experience



PHOTO/TAMMY PELUSO

Great Snorkeling Adventures

BY JOEL SIMON



Each of our lives has significant moments—short lived experiences that make lasting impressions. They change the way we view our world, ourselves and our celebration of life itself. For me, some of these most meaningful episodes have occurred while snorkeling.

Etched with indelible clarity is the memory of my first shark encounter. Full of confidence, I jumped from the stern of our small sailboat into the warm Caribbean Sea off Belize. The water was exquisitely clear and, after the bubbles of my plunge had dispersed, the silver flash of an animal as sleek as an F-14 jet fighter came into view. In one instinct-driven motion, I was back on the boat before my buddies even had a chance to get wet. "A shark, a shark is down there," I sputtered. "Look before you leap!" They all laughed, and laugh still. I also have to laugh at my reaction to that first encounter. It was just a small inquisitive reef shark that kept us company during our survey of the coral gardens but, during that initial moment of mutual surprise, it looked as big and threatening as my boundless imagination. I have since snorkeled with numerous sharks but, so far, none has been seriously threatening. However, creatures don't have to be big to create meaningful memories.

"...after the bubbles of my plunge had dispersed, the silver flash of an animal as sleek as an F-14 jet fighter came into view."

I remember with equal vividness (and much less trepidation!), my initial sighting of an octopus as it slid across the sandy bottom of Alamitos Bay in Long Beach, California, where I grew up. I followed as it slithered home to an old encrusted Coca-Cola bottle amid other sunken debris beneath a small wharf. I went to visit this animal many times and, in my young mind, we became good friends by summer's end. Since then I have treasured each time I'm lucky enough to see one of these remarkable animals.

What makes a particular snorkeling session special? Fellow enthusiasts frequently ask which snorkeling experiences have been my most memorable or, just as often, which locations offer the world's finest snorkeling. The answers are obviously highly subjective: I believe that a snorkeler's attitude is just as relevant as geography. An open mind and open eyes are the real keys to unlocking the treasures of the sea. Also, locations are always changing. Weather and water conditions, visibility, time of year and plain luck are all variables that can physically impact the snorkeling experience.

In this and upcoming issues, we will feature some of the world's most remarkable snorkeling opportunities. Among them will be regions where you can interact underwater with sea lions, docile sharks, dolphins and Manatees. We'll also highlight incredible drift snorkels, rivers filled with turtles and Gar, mangroves teeming with juvenile fish and, of course, some of the world's best snorkeling reefs. Incidentally, if you've done some extraordinary snorkeling, we'd like to hear about it. Please feel free to write me c/o SKIN DIVER Magazine, 6420 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048-5515 or e-mail me directly at JSIPhoto@aol.com.

This month Tammy Peluso shares with us her encounter with the largest and one of the most mild mannered fish in the sea: the Whale Shark. Although I've come close on several occasions and have seen them from ships, I've never (yet!) met one of these magnificent creatures below the surface. I look forward to that day and am sure it will qualify as a significant moment in my life. In the meantime, join me in reading all about this impressive event in Tammy's life.

Inside Snorkeling Tourbook

Brought to you by:
Joel Simon, **Editor**
Tamara Collins, **Executive Editor**
Susan Grube, **Art Director**
Tammy Peluso, **Contributing Editor**

Life on a Shallow Reef

The Whale Shark: The Biggest Fish in the Sea

The Adventurous Snorkeler

Snorkeling with Señor Big: The Ultimate Experience

Snorkeler's Gearbag

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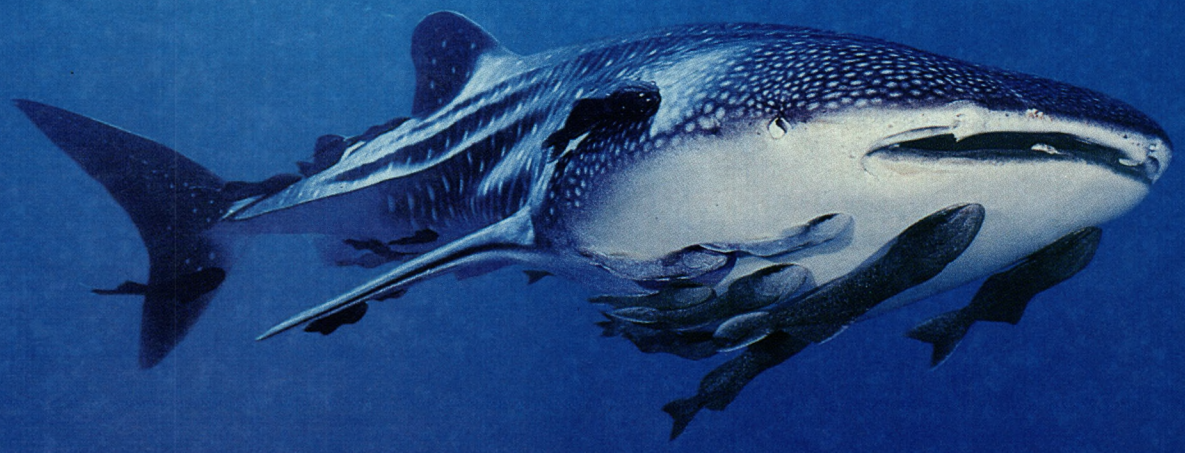


The Whale Shark:
The Biggest Fish in the Sea

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAMMY PELUSO

One would suspect it would be relatively easy to spot a 40 foot fish with a gaudy black and white checkerboard design, swimming casually at or near the surface. Surprisingly, Whale Shark encounters are extremely uncommon. Whale Sharks (*Rhincodon typus*), pelagic and migratory in nature, are circumglobal, appearing in every temperate ocean except the Mediterranean. Driven by a constant need for food, Whale Sharks are instinctively drawn to upwellings, plankton blooms and coral spawning in the open ocean waters, shallow reefs and atoll lagoons.

In the Sea of Cortez—the deep trench between mainland Mexico and the Baja Peninsula, Whale Sharks are seen most often in the spring when warming waters spur massive plankton blooms. Local operators typically see several dozen Whale Sharks each season between May and November. Another popular Whale Shark stomping ground is Ningaloo Reef off Western Australia; huge numbers of Whale Sharks appear each year, like clockwork, after the coral spawn following the March full moon.

Whale Sharks usually travel alone and, occasionally, in small groups. Although seemingly solitary, the Whale Shark typically travels with an entourage of remoras, jacks, tuna, mackerel and Pilotfish—all enjoying protection from the Whale Shark and a meal from its leftovers. Most Whale Sharks are covered with dozens of remoras that cling tightly with disk-shaped suckers; the remoras assist the shark by removing bothersome parasites.

The Whale Shark has more than 300 rows of tiny, one-eighth inch long teeth but it doesn't use them for eating. Since it's a filter feeder, it effortlessly captures plankton, pelagic crustaceans, squid and tiny baitfish just by moving through the water; the spongy tissue between the gill arches acts as a giant sieve. Anything undigestible or too big, such as a careless jack or remora, can be purged by the shark's stomach. Occasionally, Whale Sharks feed in a vertical position—thrusting themselves wildly toward the surface, ingesting congregating baitfish.

Although Whale Sharks resemble whales in size, they are actually sharks, members of the order Orectolobiformes. Whale Sharks are related to some of the more unusual shark species such as Wobbegongs, Carpetsharks, Nurse Sharks, Zebra Sharks and Blind Sharks.

The Whale Shark is unusual in design with a broad, flat, spotted head and a huge, cavernous mouth in front of its eyes. The top of the body is charcoal gray, patterned with bold whitish spots and stripes; the underside is completely white.

It is speculated the Whale Shark's method of reproduction is ovoviviparous (the egg cases are retained in the uterus for most of the embryonic development). The smallest recorded living Whale Shark was 21 inches in length and the largest more than 60 feet; most animals encountered are 30 to 40 feet.

Whether you see the Whale Shark as a fleeting shadow or are lucky enough to spend an hour, any encounter with this big fish is guaranteed to be dramatic.

Snorkeling with Señor Big:

The Ultimate Experience

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAMMY PELUSO

One of the most exciting things about underwater exploring is the dependable unpredictability—anything can happen, anytime. There is, however, one thing that is absolutely guaranteed: Whether you are a diver or a snorkeler, a photographer or a spectator, you are destined at some point to hear the gut wrenching, teeth clenching, enormously irritating phrase: "You should have been here last week." I've been told this so many times, I now ask upon arrival at a dive destination: "What did I just miss?"

So last month, when I sat in the Amigos del Mar dive shop in Cabo San Lucas and Scott, one of the divemasters, told me about his hour long encounter with a 30 foot Whale Shark two weeks prior, I barely batted an eye. I was a pro—I could take it—but inside I was screaming, "ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!" I remained calm, smiled, congratulated Scott on his great luck and made plans to meet at the shop the following morning.

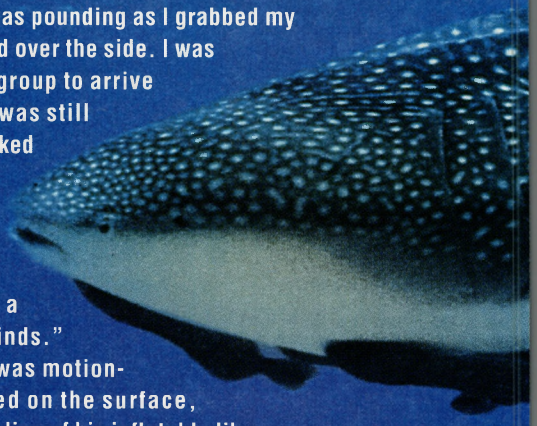
I had just arrived from La Paz and slid, luckily, into an open spot on a dive trip to Cabo Pulmo Reef—an adventure trip that would require a two hour car ride and a short ride to the dive site via *pangas* (small Mexican fishing boats) rented from local fisherman. It's a long day but worth every bit of effort; Cabo Pulmo is distinguished for having the only living coral reef on this side of North America.

This was the site of Scott's recent encounter but it could have happened anywhere in the Sea of Cortez. It's all a matter of being in the right place at the right time. I'd heard all the stories about big animal encounters at Cabo Pulmo but, during almost a dozen dives, I'd never seen anything larger than a Barracuda.

Although I have been skunked at even sure thing big animal spots around the world, I am eternally optimistic by nature. As we headed to the dive site I started thinking about Scott's recent encounter and scanned the horizon as the line "lightning never strikes twice" flashed in my mind. With the tiniest glimmer of hope I shouted over the roar of the engine to our *panga* captain, "any Whale Sharks lately?" "Just one, several weeks ago," he replied. There is one thing I have learned over the years: rarely do you get anything unless you ask. So I asked for a Whale Shark and went for a dive.

There were about 24 divers in our group, in half a dozen *pangas*. Everyone was headed for the seamount known as El Bajo, which comes within 50 to 60 feet of the surface. Less than five minutes had passed when I saw Scott off in the distance waving like a madman, making shark fin signs and swimming furiously; he was giving me the "up" sign, telling me to get out of the water. On the surface I discovered that one of the boat captains had spotted a Whale Shark nearby and had signaled Scott with the engine.

I jumped in the *panga* and rode the short distance to where the Whale Shark was lazing on the surface with snorkelers. My heart was pounding as I grabbed my gear and spilled over the side. I was the first in my group to arrive and the scene was still and quiet; it looked as if the Whale Shark and one of the snorkelers were having a "meeting of minds." The snorkeler was motionless—crouched on the surface, holding the bowline of his inflatable like a kid holding a balloon. The Whale Shark was maintaining a two to three foot distance—looking him square in the eye.



The pace picked up quickly. Before long there were more than 30 people in the water. The divers in my group were from Wallin Dive Center in Northern California and Japan. Some snorkelers had their own boats; others were with local operators. Word spreads quickly when there's a Whale Shark in town, even the locals get excited.

At one point the scene resembled a three ring circus as the Whale Shark weaved its way through the human maze, gulping mouthfuls of bubbles—most likely mistaking the effervescence for plankton. Surprisingly, there was an underlying calm and, for the most part, everyone waited patiently for the Whale Shark to swim by, there was no chasing, grabbing or harassing.

Snorkeling in the open water with Whale Sharks is an experience that will send your mind reeling with the gentle beauty and scale of this magnificent creature.

I felt fortunate to be in the water with those particular divers and snorkelers that day, just as much as the Whale Shark. What was surely one of the exciting experiences of our lives could have easily been non-existent or a disaster. Instead, because of everyone's consideration of the animal, and each other, the Whale Shark stayed with us for more than an hour; even returning for an encore performance on the second dive. It didn't make any difference whether you were on snorkel or scuba that day, the experience was pure magic.

Many of us touched the Whale Shark (without gloves) and the animal really seemed to like it, probably mistaking us for a new type of cleaning service. Amazingly, during the hour long encounter, I only saw one person ride the Whale Shark and, to his credit, his actions were totally non-aggressive. Instead of gripping the dorsal fin he gently placed his hands on either side. Touching is not necessarily harmful but, unfortunately, some people don't know where to draw the line. I've personally seen a Manta Ray fiercely flick three divers off its back and disappear for the rest of the day. I've also witnessed encounters between humans and animals that were incredible. The most important thing is to keep the Whale Shark's well being and comfort in mind.

Photos of divers and snorkelers riding Manta Rays and Whale Sharks have fueled many fantasies, including mine. The reality is, if you are lucky enough to encounter a Whale Shark, the real gift is not being able to hold onto a body part, it's the privilege of being able to look this gentle giant in the eye and connect, for just a little while.

Fin-esse:

3 Fins to Propel You Toward Adventure

BY TY SAWYER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

Fins are a tough choice for snorkelers. Fit, feel and comfort are of primary importance and needs vary from person to person. Long hours spent in the water should not be hard on the feet or cause cramped leg muscles. When looking for a snorkeling fin, start with the footpocket. A soft, ergonomically sculpted footpocket equates to pampered feet and no blisters. The footpocket should fit snugly and be pliant. Next, a lightweight fin material reduces leg fatigue and, with some of the new materials being developed, actually assists the snorkeler with more thrust to kick ratio for added power with less effort.

IN BRIEF

Sea Quest Horizon 2
Features: Plastic fin; full footpocket
Sizes: Child's 9 through adult's 13
Colors: Pink, blue, lime
Price: $24 to $28
Information: (619) 438-1101

The three snorkeling fins described in this article suit various budgets, needs and skill levels. But all are soft on the foot and easy on the leg so you can enjoy snorkeling for your entire holiday.

SEA QUEST HORIZON 2: This is the most economical fin of those featured and is most appropriate for the entry level snorkeler. The footpocket is made of thermoplastic rubber and has a pull tab on the heel for easy foot removal and insertion. The lightweight fin has two vents to facilitate an easy kick stroke. The Horizon 2 comes in pink, blue or lime in a child's size 9 through adult's 13.

SCUBAPRO VELOCE CLUB: This full footpocket fin is ideal for tropical waters. Its flow dynamics are exceptional. The advanced shape channels water for stability through the kick cycle. The thermoplastic rubber footpocket is soft, pliable and comfortable. The Veloce Club comes in black, pink or neon yellow in sizes XS, S, M, L, XL.

IN BRIEF

Scubapro Veloce Club
Features: Advanced flow dynamics plastic fin; thermoplastic full footpocket
Sizes: XS to XL
Colors: Black, pink, neon yellow
Price: $44
Information: (800) GO-SCUBA

MARES TROPIC: This fin features a Tecralene blade attached to a thermoplastic footpocket. The footpocket has an anatomical design for a solid fit and features a notched tab on the heel for easy donning and doffing. The lightweight blade has excellent thrust characteristics. The Tropic comes in green, blue, yellow or pink in shoe sizes from a child's 9 to an adult's 11.

IN BRIEF

Mares Tropic
Features: Tecralene blade; soft, thermoplastic full footpocket
Sizes: Child's 9 through adult's 11
Colors: Green, blue, yellow, pink
Price: $25
Information: (203) 855-1356

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Skin 'N Scuba Dive	Independence	MO	816-358-0855
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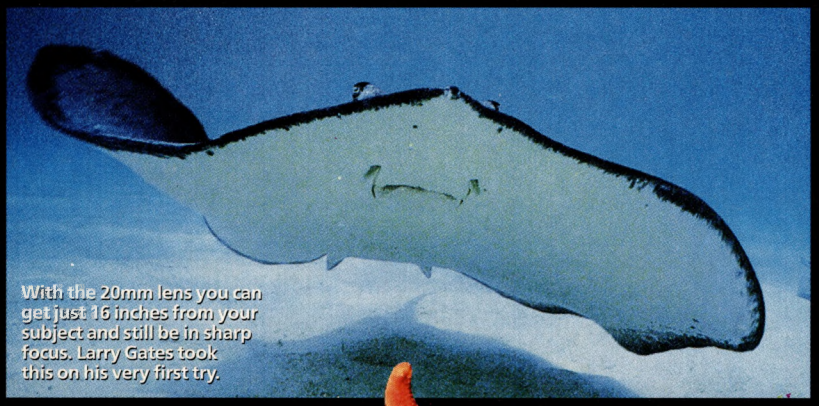

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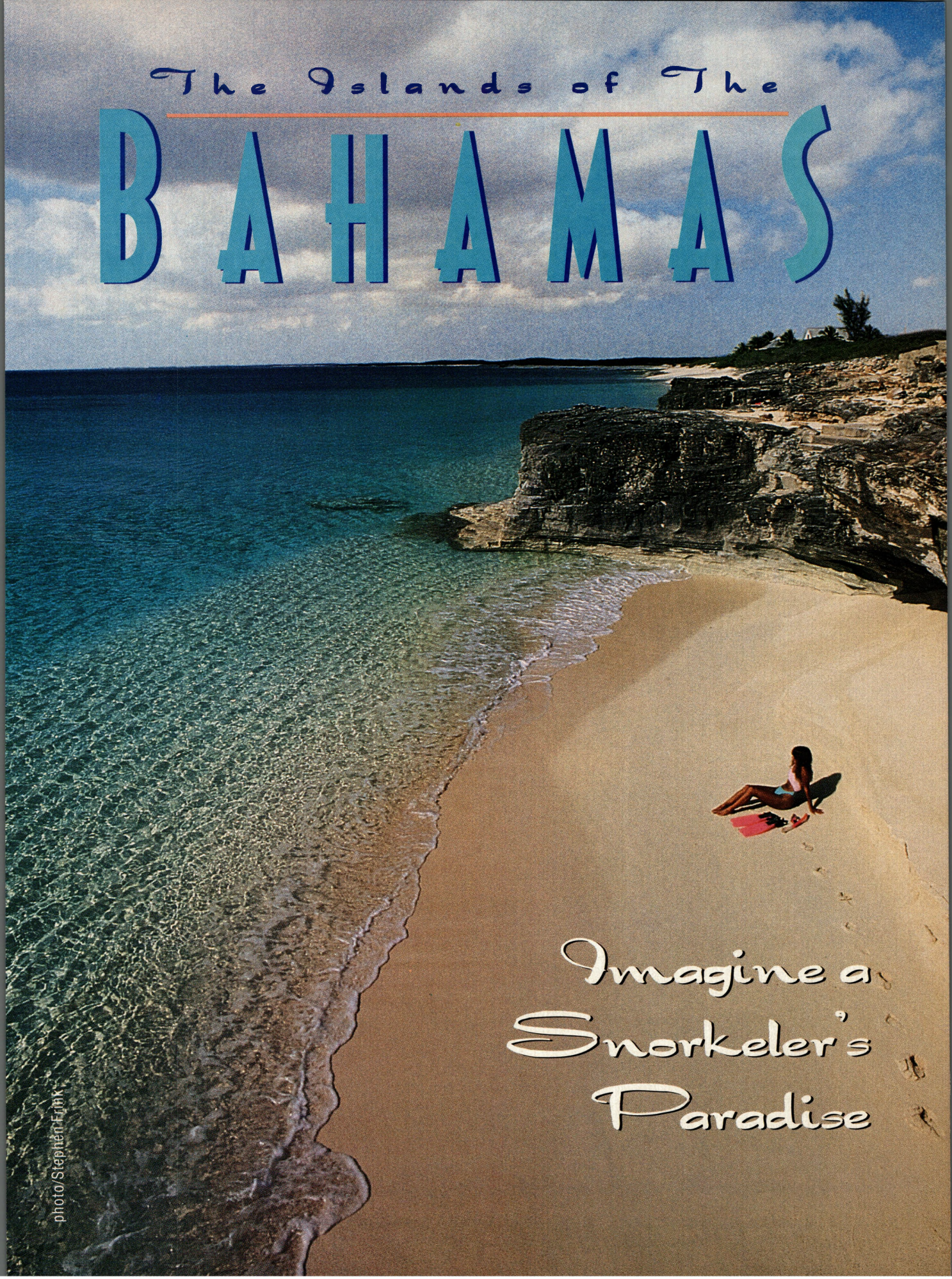
The Islands of The
BAHAMAS
Imagine a
Snorkeler's
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photo/Stephen Frink

A plunge into New Providence's Goulding Cay reveals a conch shell and a glittering school of Silversides.

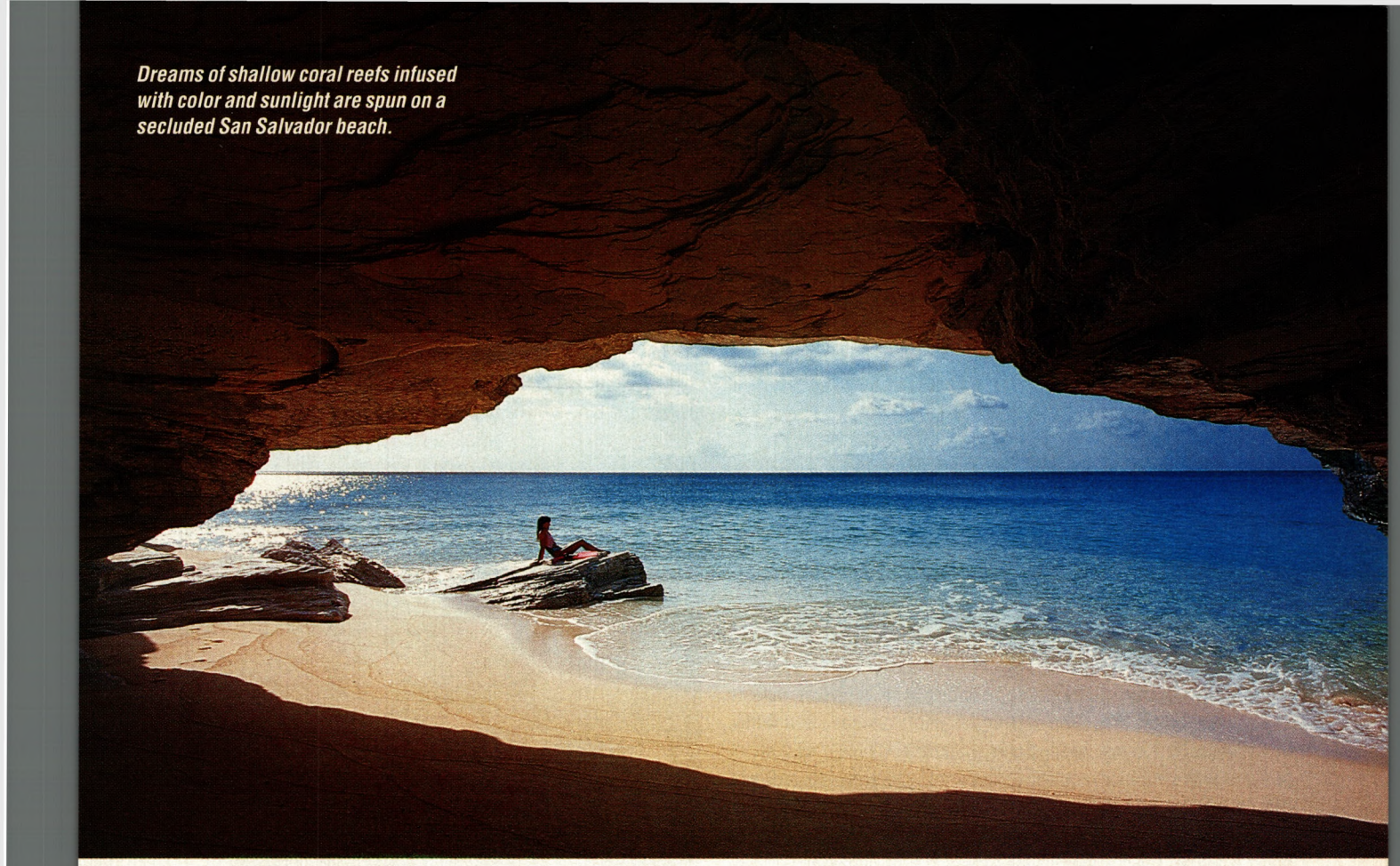
Text and Photography by
Stephen Frink

On The Islands of The Bahamas, there exists a world of wonder easily accessible with just a mask, snorkel and fins. The warm, clear seas nurture a marine nursery along the vast Bahamas Bank, an impressive pelagic population traveling the Gulf Stream and countless acres of mangrove forests lining the shore. These combine to form and replenish shallow coral reefs rich with both hard and soft corals in no more than 15 feet of water. Here giant forests of Elkhorn Coral, impressive Pillar Coral colonies and perfectly intact boulder corals thrive. Colorful sponges and gorgonians also decorate the shallow reefs and the population of reef tropicals is rich and varied.

Given the massive area of coral reefs just below the surface and The Bahamas' long tradition of seafaring, contact between boats and reefs is, at times, inevitable. Conservative estimates suggest more than 500 shipwrecks dot The Bahamas. Some are wooden ships several hundred years old, of which little remains besides ballast stones and perhaps a few cannons. But, most of the shipwrecks snorkelers enjoy today are steel hulled ships from a later era of steam and diesel power.

Shallow shipwrecks, typically found in 20 feet of water and less, have been brought to ruin by navigational error or storm and each has its own tragic story to tell. Aside from the fascinating glimpse into history these wrecks provide, they also harbor huge populations of tropical fish and provide an exciting and memorable snorkeling experience.

The Bahamas' reefs and wrecks are beautifully scenic but there are more active encounters that can offer the adventurous snorkeler the experience of a lifetime. Dreams of looking an Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin in the eye or frolicking in the open sea with a pod of wild Spotted Dolphins can be fulfilled here. At other sites snorkelers can rest at the surface while sharks swirl around bait 15 feet beneath them or feed and caress a group of stingrays that resides in a marine park. There are also high velocity drift-swims on tidal currents and any number of oceanic or inland blue holes to explore. With 700 islands and 2,000 islets scattered across more than 100,000 square miles of tropical southwestern Atlantic Ocean, there is a staggering diversity of snorkeling options offshore this picturesque island paradise.



Dreams of shallow coral reefs infused with color and sunlight are spun on a secluded San Salvador beach.

New Providence

New Providence is home to the bustling metropolis of Nassau, the capital of The Bahamas. It is also an island of abundant natural beauty. Even in proximity to the downtown area and nearby Paradise Island, there are plenty of beautiful coral reefs and shallow historical shipwrecks such as the ***Mahoney***.

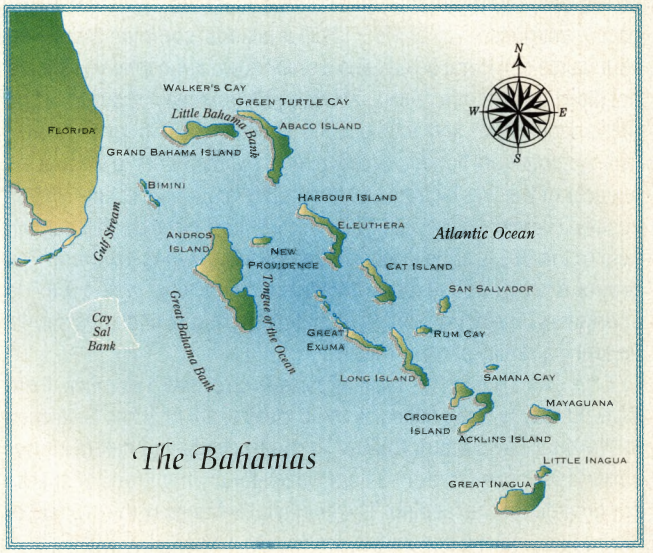
If you want to venture farther than the shores of New Providence, there are many dive shops in Nassau that can arrange a visit to the offshore islands. At scenic Atholl Island, clouds of Sergeant Majors await daily handouts, the result of decades of fish feeding. Schools of Midnight Parrotfish graze for algae among the hard corals and schools of grunts and snappers add to the piscine profusion.

Rose Island is a captivating little place where snorkelers can add a relaxing beach outing to their underwater activities. The gentle sandy shore leads to a shallow barrier reef comprised of scattered coral heads with an impressive fish population, including the ubiquitous grunts and snappers, unusual French and Queen Angelfish, parrotfish, triggerfish, moray eels and, camouflaged in the sand, Peacock Flounders.

At Blue Lagoon Island, just a four mile boat ride from Paradise Island, there are several different facilities devoted to watersport pleasures. The beach is a perfect place to simply relax in the sun or participate in more vigorous activities, such as parasailing, paddleboats or snorkeling. **Stingray City** is a three acre marine park on the leeside of Blue Lagoon. Similar to its Grand Cayman namesake, the highlight is the opportunity to swim among and feed 10 to 15 Southern Stingrays that reside there.

Education is the focus of another Blue Lagoon marine life "close encounter" that is very popular with visitors. The **Dolphin Encounter** combines an observation session topside with a 30 minute in-water program, where participants can swim, touch and frolic with the playful dolphins.

Underwater scenic wonders off the southwest tip of New Providence Island await snorkelers seeking a well developed coral reef



with more extensive snorkeling options. Two of my favorite sites are **Goulding Cay**, where huge Elkhorn Corals rise to the surface from 25 feet, and **Southwest Reef**, where colorful patch reefs of Fire Coral and gorgonians await exploration in less than 12 feet of water. These sites

are protected under most weather conditions and offer clear water with gorgeous coral formations. I usually head to these New Providence sites when I need to photograph a snorkeling scenario. It is actually possible for me to commute there and return to Miami in a single day.

As stunning as these natural snorkel attractions may be, two of the most popular shallow water sites are the **James Bond Wrecks** and the ***Bahama Mama*** near the **Runway**. The 100 foot ***Tears of Allah*** from *Never Say Never Again* is easily visible from the surface, as is the adjacent framework of the old **Vulcan Bomber** from *Thunderball*. While at 50 feet the Runway is a little deep for snorkelers, the *Bahama Mama* sits upright and provides fascinating relief. Yellowtail Snappers swarm the wreck and, nearby, a dozen or so Caribbean Reef Sharks come to the Runway for active feeding sessions.

Grand Bahama

Grand Bahama Island is the home of Freeport, The Bahamas' second most populous city and a center for both recreation and commerce. Nightlife, luxury hotels, casinos, shopping and miles of virtually deserted beaches combine to make this a terrific leisure travel destination. Snorkelers will find an attractive and well developed shallow coral reef here. Comprised mostly of Elkhorn Corals and seafans, it rises nearly to the surface from about 15 feet.

One of the most inspirational and exciting snorkeling experiences anywhere is off the West End of Grand Bahama on the famed **White Sand Ridge**. Here, a resident pod of wild Spotted Dolphins has been interacting with swimmers and snorkelers from visiting live-aboards and dive operations, such as the *Nekton Pilot* and Bottom Time Adventures. I've been in the water with as many as 16 dolphins for as long as two hours at a time. The dolphins set the pace in this thrilling wilderness encounter. They are not enticed by food but seem to interact out of sheer curiosity and frivolity. Or, perhaps they are just amused by our clumsy attempts to mimic their natural grace and speed.

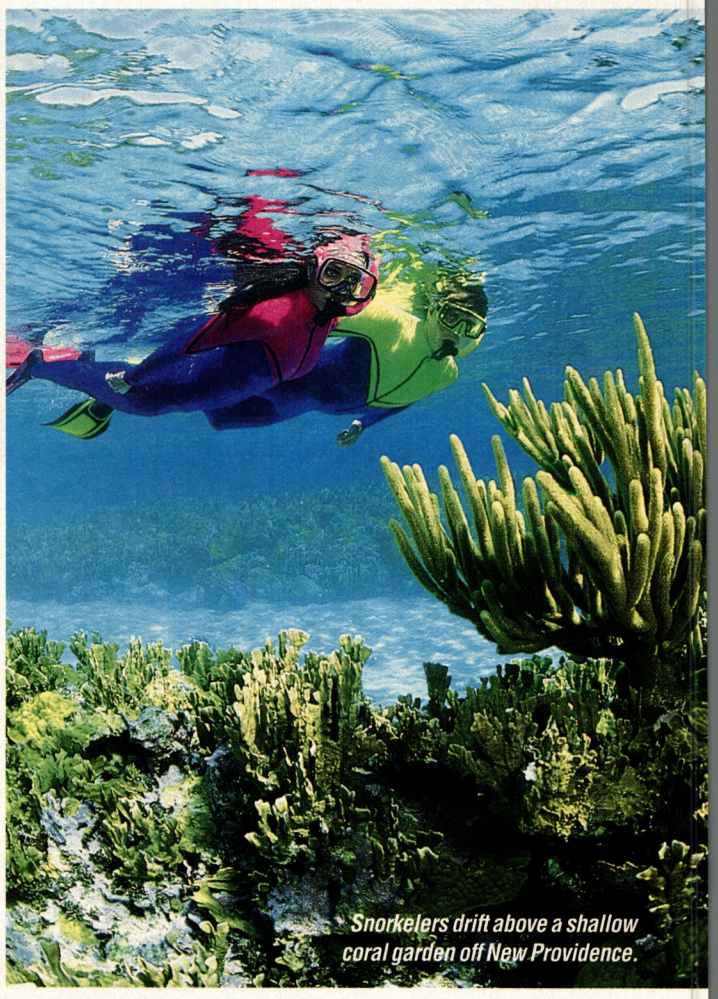
The Out Islands

In addition to Freeport and New Providence, there are another 18 islands of The Bahamas that sustain significant inhabitation. Known as the Out Islands, these "quiet cays and islands offer a slower-paced, unspoiled way of life...the Out Islands' common traits—an abundance of natural beauty and a small-town atmosphere—should not disguise their differences, however. Visitors may be surprised by the variety of sites and activities the islands have to offer." The preceding quote from Fodor's *Guide to the Bahamas* refers to the topside aspects of the Out Islands but the variety of its snorkeling sites is equally diverse. Visitors can easily access these sites by enlisting the help of the Out Islands' organized guided snorkeling program. The program is featured at many hotels and dive shops, where there is snorkeling instruction, maps of underwater trails and slide shows featuring a variety of marine life.

The Abacos: This chain of islands stretches 130 miles, from Walker's Cay to Great Abaco. A world-class shark feed has developed at Walker's Cay's **Shark Rodeo**. Here a frozen ball of bait (a chumsickle) is suspended from a float while literally hundreds of sharks congregate for the feeding. The chumsickle hangs within 15 feet of the surface, making this a most exciting shark snorkel.

At Treasure and Green Turtle Cays, an extensive shallow reef with many exemplary snorkeling sites parallels the coast. **The Pillars** features a profusion of Pillar Corals in 5 to 20 feet of water. **Elkhorn Park Reef** is dominated by *Acropora palmata* (Elkhorn Coral). **Pelican Park Reef** is noted for its schools of Blue Tangs, parrotfish and angelfish, while portions of the wrecked steamship ***San Jacinto*** are shallow enough to enjoy on snorkel. The Fowl Cay Land and Sea Preserve off Marsh Harbour has protected marine life for more than a dozen years, rendering the groupers, eels and shallow reef life especially friendly.

Andros: The largest island in The Bahamas, Andros is actually a series of small islands separated by myriad creeks, lakes and blue holes. The world's third largest barrier reef rims its entire western coastline, creating a shallow reef rich with Elkhorn Corals and extensive marine life. Snorkeling pleasures are found everywhere. Beneath the dock at Small Hope Bay there are Mutton Snappers, Barracuda, angelfish and wrasse. The bay also offers gardens of Elkhorn and Staghorn Corals, powdery sand alleyways that weave through plate corals and patch reefs and shallow shipwrecks such as the ***Potomac***, portions of which are awash at low tide. A resident marine biologist will escort small groups through the mangroves, where life on the reef begins.


Snorkelers drift above a shallow coral garden off New Providence.

The Berry Islands: This small chain of islands rimming the eastern edge of the Great Bahama Bank has long invited the exploration of yachtsmen, fishermen and divers. Now snorkelers have discovered the crystalline waters around Great Harbour Cay and off uninhabited islands such as the Jolter Cays, where there are exquisite Elkhorn gardens. Chub Cay is known as the "Fishbowl of The Bahamas," with an extensive shallow reef and marine nursery.

The Biminis: Even though this tiny Bahamian isle lies just 48

Snorkel the Islands of The Bahamas

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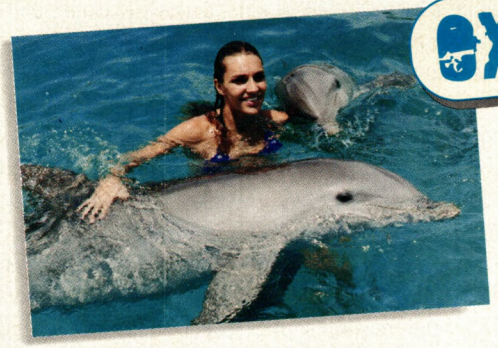

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miles east of Miami, its slow pace and island charm are light-years away. Long noted for its scuba and angling attractions, Bimini offers snorkelers reefs, shipwrecks and an opportunity to interact with wild Spotted Dolphins. At **Rainbow Reef**, unbelievable schools of grunts cloak the Boulder Corals as Nurse Sharks peer from beneath ledges. The ***Sapona*** wreck sits mostly out of the water but beneath the waves is a veritable fish oasis surrounding the submerged propellers and twisted debris. When the live-aboard *Nekton Pilot* visits this area, its passengers enjoy snorkeling the wreck of the ***Hesperus***, where there are schools of French Grunts, Spadefish and several resident Loggerhead Turtles. The *Nekton Pilot* has a sophisticated, dedicated snorkeling program utilizing special twin hulled tenders and a snorkeling pro who guides guests through sunlit, shallow reefs.

Cat Island: In the southern Bahamas, Cat Island is sparsely populated, quiet and serene. Broad sand beaches abound, with individual coral heads with lush soft corals sprinkled throughout. The reef begins just ten feet offshore Fernandez Bay; near Port Howe the corals are equally accessible. Vast areas of the coastline toward Columbus Point are perforated with caves harboring fascinating marine life, such as spider crabs, lobsters, stingrays and Nurse Sharks.

Eleuthera: Eleuthera and Harbour Island offer extensive snorkeling opportunities. **Sea Gardens**, off Harbour Island, offers forests of Elkhorn Coral rising to within 10 feet of the surface from a 35 foot sand bottom. In less than 20 feet of water, Spotted Eagle Rays are a common sight at **Pink House Reef**.

Snorkeling is a primary activity for most visitors to Eleuthera, both because of the quality of the shallow water experience and the sophisticated snorkeling infrastructure. There are five sites in **Cove Eleuthera**, including a massive concentration of Sun Anemones at Gaulding's Cay, a gorgonian forest at **Seafans Garden** and a place right along the shore where snorkelers can watch the graceful maneuverings of a resident school of Spotted Eagle Rays.

The Exumas: The Exumas consist of more than 350 mostly uninhabited islands and cays extending more than 100 miles. Within the chain is a lovely settlement at Georgetown, Great Exuma. There are superior snorkel opportunities here, with an extensive coral reef, a protected harbor and rental boats for snorkelers. There is a gorgeous **Blue Hole** in just six feet of water that invites clouds of tropical fish. Resident marine biologist Ed Haxby leads groups on educational tours of this unique place. Off Staniel Cay is the popular fish feeding action at **Thunderball Cave**.

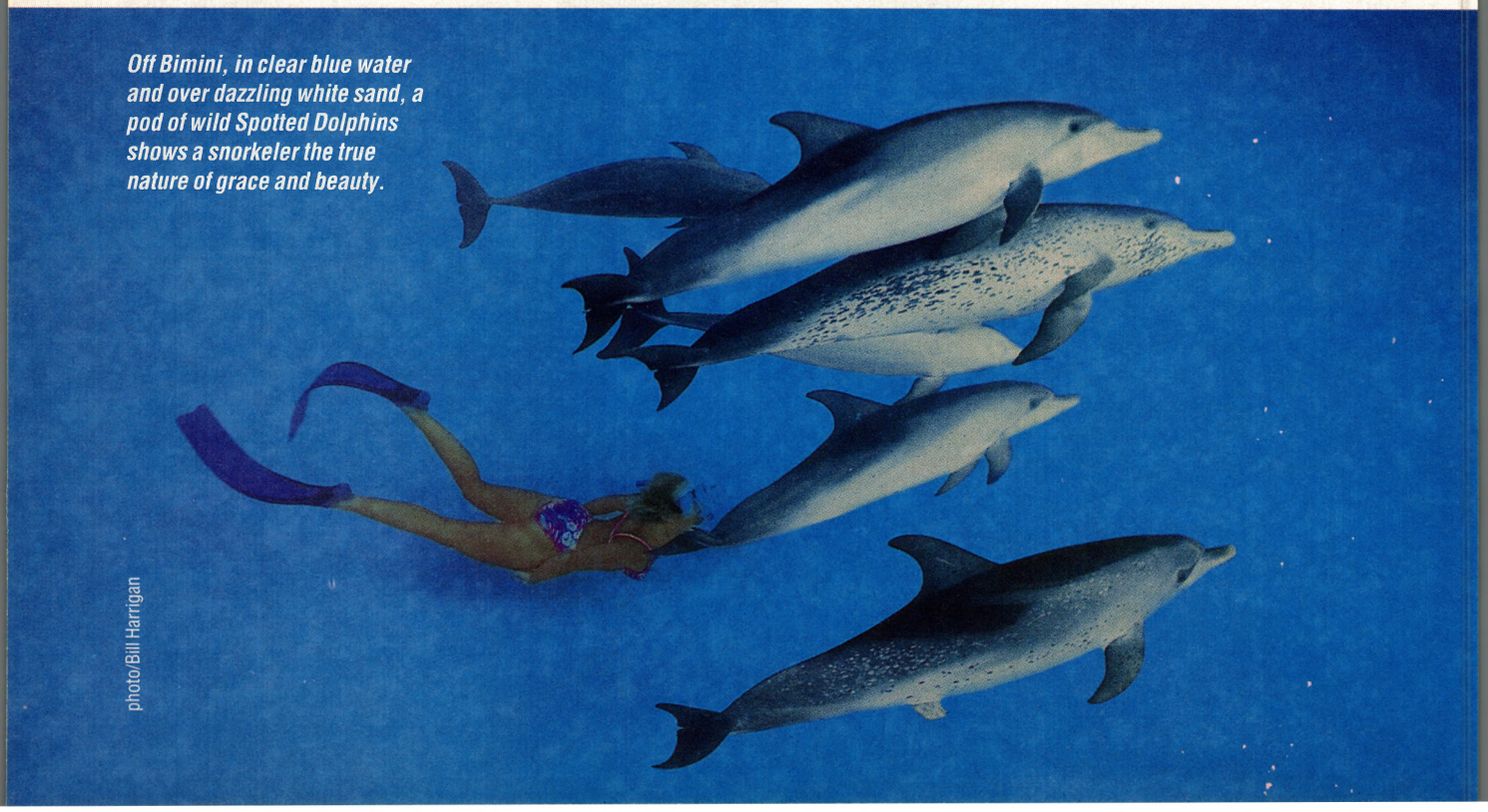
Live-aboards have long come to the shallow protected reefs within the Exuma National Land and Sea Park. The drift snorkel along the tidal flow through Wax Cay Cut provides a magic carpet ride past pristine coral reefs and glorious filter feeders.

Long Island: While the western coast of this 90 mile island has soft, sandy beaches, the eastern shore falls away to the ocean from dramatic rocky cliffs and ironshore. Isolated coral heads surrounded by luxuriant white sand dot Cape Santa Maria and tidal pools and shallow reefs await beach snorkelers from the famed Stella Maris dive resort. A day trip to Conception Island offers snorkelers a chance to explore historic shipwrecks from the age of steam and sail.

San Salvador: With water clarity at times exceeding 200 feet this is a paradise for snorkelers. Shallow patch reefs, such as **Snapshot Reef** and **Macro Mania**, provide schools of friendly fish and photogenic groupers and the 280 foot steamship ***Frascate*** is scattered in only 15 to 20 feet of water. The *Nekton Pilot* visits San Sal's **Columbus Courtyard**, which offers pristine coral heads with reef critters tucked in the nooks and crannies.

Conclusion

The quiet solitude of the Out Islands will appeal to some; others may be attracted to the sparkling activity of Grand Bahama and New Providence. Whatever your destination of choice, you will find clear, warm, sunlit seas with shipwrecks, coral reefs teeming with life and the opportunity for amazing encounters with gentle inhabitants. The Islands of The Bahamas are ripe for exploration and just a mask, snorkel and fins will take you there.



Off Bimini, in clear blue water and over dazzling white sand, a pod of wild Spotted Dolphins shows a snorkeler the true nature of grace and beauty.

photo/Bill Harrigan

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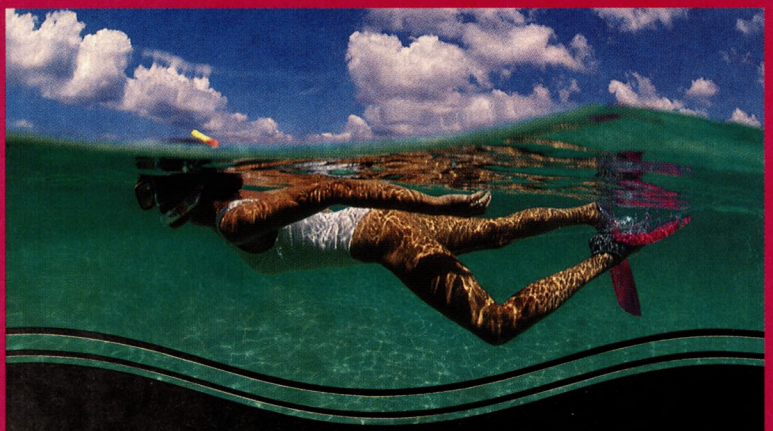

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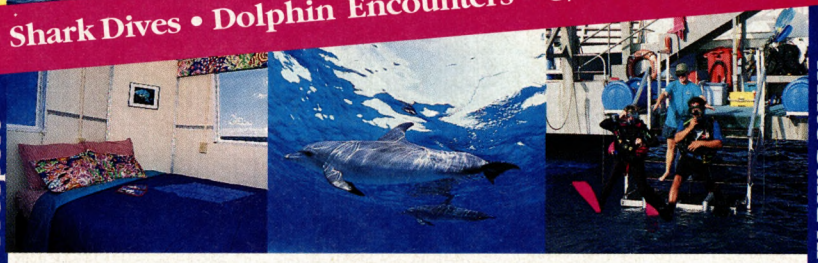

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The businesses listed in this section offer specialized services for visiting snorkelers. All of the resorts offer a daily, ongoing program of reef education and fish identification, giving snorkelers a unique experience. All of the Snorkel Tours featured in the Bonaire Guided Snorkeling Program begin with a one-half hour Slide Show followed by a guided tour to some of the Caribbean's finest shallow coral reefs!

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Dive Notes

HUGH PARKEY'S BELIZE DIVE CONNECTION: Diving the Belizean Barrier Reef and the Turneffe Islands Atoll from Belize City is a reality. Hugh and Teresa Parkey, owners of Hugh Parkey's Belize Dive Connection and Fort Street Restaurant and Guest House in Belize City, are now offering day trips and dive packages. Seldom dived areas of the barrier reef and the Turneffe Islands Atoll are only minutes away. More than 70 sites on the Turneffe Islands Atoll alone will provide a lifetime of diving.

Personally led by Hugh Parkey, these trips will take a maximum of only six divers, guaranteeing personal attention. Between dives, relax, snorkel and have lunch on one of the four islands that sit atop the barrier reef.

All-inclusive packages are available with accommodations and food provided through Fort Street Restaurant and Guest House and diving provided by Hugh Parkey's Belize Dive Connection. Fort Street is in a three story colonial style house in the historic Fort Point section. The restaurant at Fort Street is one of the best in the country and provides some of the freshest local seafood, meat, vegetables and fruit daily. Choose from a four day/three night package or a six day/five night package. The six day package offers three days of barrier reef diving, plus a day trip to Mayan ruins at Lamanai.

For more information or reservations please call (888) 223-5403. You can send e-mail to fortst@btl.net or fax (011) 501 2 78808.

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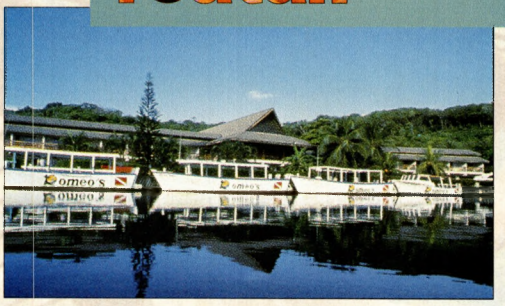

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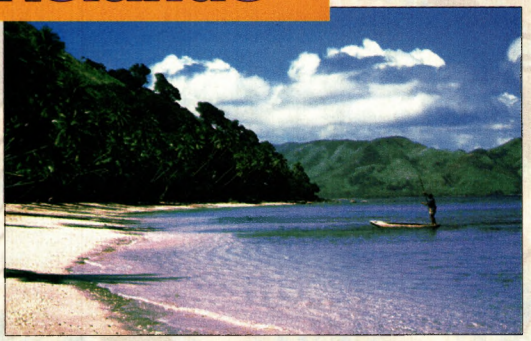

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TRAVEL

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- THE PERFECT DIVE VACATION HIDE-AWAY.

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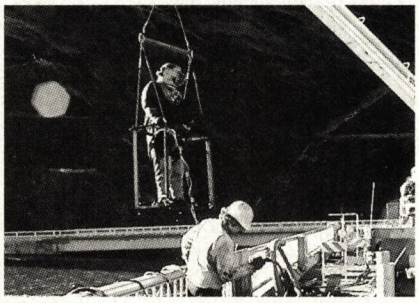
Safe, Successful Commercial Diving

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY E.R. CROSS

Each year hundreds of recreational divers will make the decision to become commercial divers. Most will start their careers by attending a commercial diving school. For this reason, recreational divers should know what diving schools teach. Also, they should be aware of future trends in diving technology. Divers should know both the kinds of jobs and the equipment they might have to use. Schools should be evaluated to see if they have the technology equal to that of the present and possible future. For informed divers the transition from recreational to commercial will be successful.

In this and in some future Technifacts, I will review the areas of work in the commercial diving industry and some of the tools and equipment divers have to use to safely and successfully complete their assigned tasks. Obviously, the most important of these are life support and related equipment.



The many skills necessary for a successful career in commercial diving are usually acquired at a professional commercial diving school.

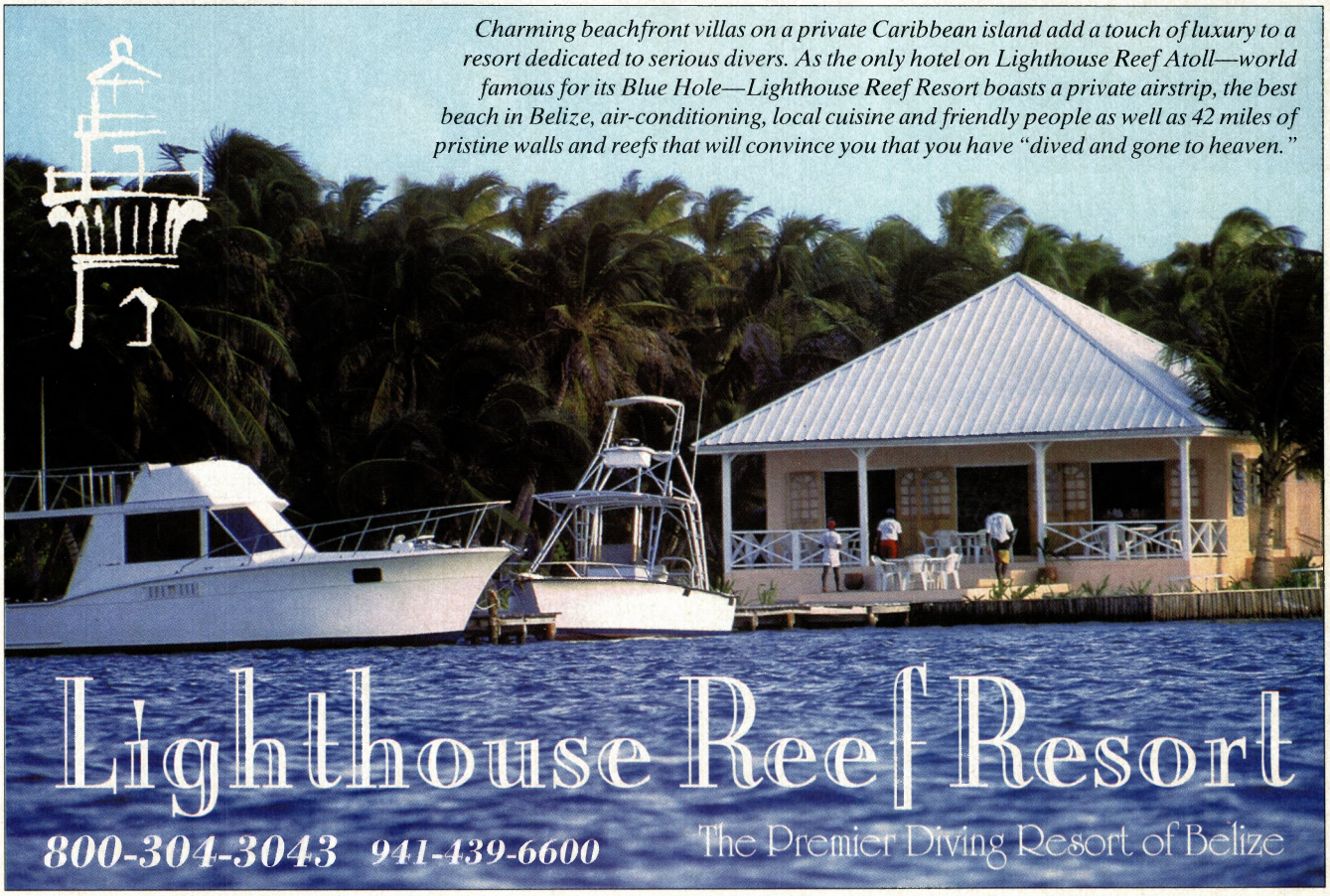
LIFE SUPPORT EQUIPMENT

Life support equipment includes that which provides a breathing gas. It also includes lifelines, communication systems and heating equipment. It should be noted that life support equipment for a commercial diver is far more extensive and complex than that of a recreational diver. The reasons for this are the complexity and potential hazards of the work site and the demands of the jobs.

Under some stringent safety conditions, Occupation, Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations permit limited use of scuba in commercial diving. However, many contractors are members of the Association of Diving Contractors (ADC) and do not use scuba.

Most commercial diving work is performed by divers using several kinds of helmets and related equipment and with what have become known as bandmask rigs. Either can use compressed air or a mix of gases as a breathing medium. Both types of equipment can be surface

(Continued on Page 138)



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On Land, Over Sea or in the Cradle of the Deep, BVI's Nanny Cay Resort is an Oasis of Sports

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY BILL HARRIGAN

This may sound like heresy but sometimes diving is not enough. Let me hasten to add, before you tear the magazine up and pitch it in the trash, that diving comes first, of course. But many divers enjoy other activities, such as mountain biking, tennis, sailing and windsurfing, between forays underwater and sometimes have a difficult time combining these sports on the same vacation. At Nanny Cay Resort and Marina, an oasis of sports tucked in between Road Town and Sopers Hole on Tortola in the British Virgin Islands, you can find all these and great diving, too.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Nanny Cay Resort is best known for:

- RMS *Rhone*
- Healthy reefs
- Multitudes of fish
- Abundant sports activities

Nanny Cay Resort has bundled a collection of high quality sports in one of the most beautiful island settings in the world and offers them in an attractive set of packages. All of the packages include accommodations, round trip airport transfers and hotel tax. There is a package for each sport, including diving, sailing, mountain biking and windsurfing. If you have no previous experience in any of these sports, beginner packages with daily instruction are available. Divers can choose from two, four or seven night packages, with two tank dives on each full day. Additional nights can be added separately. If you want to devote some time to the other sports, Nanny Cay will design a custom package for you.

Three levels of accommodations are available, the standard, deluxe and honeymoon. All of the rooms feature air-conditioning, television and telephone.

***Left: The Nanny Cay Resort pool area overlooking Sir Francis Drake Channel. Above: The colorful and renowned RMS* Rhone.**

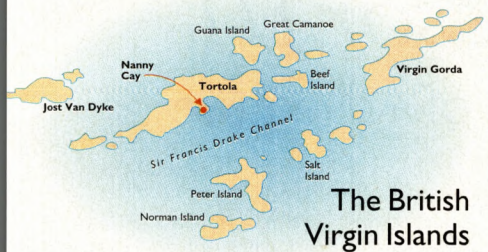
Generous dimensions, terra cotta tile floors, island prints and private balconies with ocean or marina views make the rooms warm and inviting. Poolside is one of the favorite gathering places at Nanny Cay, owing in part to the spectacular scenery from the unusual mini-island setting. To get to the pool, you walk over a small pedestrian bridge and around the Peg Leg Restaurant. The pool is on a private point with a panoramic view across the open water to Norman, Peter and St. John Islands.

BLUE WATER DIVERS

Michael Royle, better known on Tortola as Muffy, has put a lot of himself into Blue Water Divers and it shows in the personal service and high standards of the operation.

With six instructors on staff, Blue Water Divers is an excellent choice for any level of instruction from the PADI Discover Scuba resort course to the Instructor Development Course. Nanny Cay Resort sponsors the PADI Instructor Evaluation in the British Virgin Islands every September, so you can take the instructor course and the IE in one location.

Blue Water Divers' three diesel powered boats visit all the great BVI dive sites, including the **RMS *Rhone***. This wreck features a shallow stern section and a largely intact but deeper bow section. Both sections have enough fascinating sights for dozens of dives. BVI reefs are known for their healthy corals and multitudes of fish species. A circuit around the



reef at the **Indians**, for instance, will provide a look at deep coral channels, shallow caverns and mini walls. The encrusting corals and sponges at **Painted Walls** make these canyons colorful and unique.

BOATS, BIKES AND MORE

Chris Ghiorse, the likable owner and operator of Last Stop Sports, can set you up on a state of the art mountain bike in minutes. These are not beat up beach cruisers but sophisticated mountain bikes. Take off on your own or try a tour such as the hike to the top of Sage Mountain and ride down via paved roads or a challenging natural trail.

If yachting is your passion but you hate to sail over all that clear, warm water without getting at least a couple of dives in, then Nanny Cay is your place. Four on-site charter operators, including Sun Yachts, North-South, Foot Loose and Off Shore feature a wide range of sail and power yachts. For neophyte skippers, the four day Learn to Sail course is fun and will give you the confidence to captain your own boat. The diving part of your cruise can be conveniently arranged by Blue Water Divers. One of the most popular arrangements is rendezvous diving, where Blue Water Divers meets your boat at your anchorage, takes you diving, then delivers you back to your boat. Or, just

(Continued on Page 81)

PRINCESS DIVERS AT PRINCESS BEACH RESORT & CASINO

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photo/courtesy Aggressor Fleet

Bay Islands Aggressor III

Explore an Intoxicating Wilderness of Adventure

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM CHURCH

Top: The* Bay Islands Aggressor III *carries 18 divers to adventures off Roatan, Guanaja and the Cayos Cochinos. Above: The walls of the Bay Islands are covered with an exquisite variety of sponges and corals.

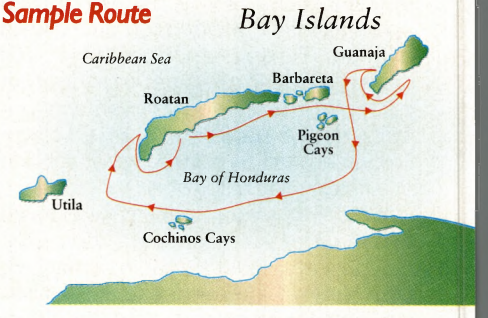
Never been on the *Bay Islands Aggressor III*? Let me show you what it's like, day by day. This is just an introduction, though. It can't compare to an actual week of superb diving with fun-loving people; a week of living the Aggressor Fleet motto of "eat, sleep and dive!" Keep in mind that this is an account of my last trip, the dive sites visited are dependent upon mother nature; the crew members present may differ owing to scheduling and/or personnel changes.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON, ARRIVAL DAY: The captain and a crew member greeted us at the Roatan Airport with hearty handshakes. Fifteen minutes later, we stepped aboard *Bay Islands Aggressor III*. While awaiting departure, some guests visited Casa Romeo's bar and restaurant, about 40 feet from *Bay Islands Aggressor III*'s berth. Other passengers checked out the ship that would be their home for the next week.

One hundred ten feet long, *Bay Islands Aggressor III* is broad and stable, with a 22 foot beam. She can cruise at 15 knots and accommodates up to 18 guests in seven double staterooms and one quad. A head with shower is at each end of the below decks stateroom hallway, there's a third head on the dive deck. Each stateroom has a sink, mirror and air-conditioning. Electricity is 110 volt. Between dives guests can relax at the bar or hot-tub on the partially shaded sundeck or in the main salon, where the ship has a collection of paperbacks and videos.

After dinner on the boat, Captain Dan, a PADI instructor, formally introduced his crew: Mike Henderson, first mate and divemaster; Jessie Ruis, engineer and divemaster; Myma Collins, chef; Enrique Goodman, electrician and steward; and Jason Wesley, photo pro and PADI instructor. Dan welcomed us and discussed the week's itinerary. The boat left its dock early the next morning; our first dives took place off Roatan.

Bay Islands Aggressor III
Sample Route



SUNDAY: At **Port Royal**, we found huge Pillar Corals towering over white sand chutes streaming between coral formations. Hordes of reef fish, including three enormous Blue Parrotfish and "Mr. Toadfish," reside there. Our afternoon dive featured **Paul's Wall**, which has huge deep water gorgonians, enormous Elephant Ear Sponges, Azure Vase Sponges and Black Coral.

MONDAY: Monday found the *Bay Islands Aggressor III* anchored off

Guanaja, home of the ***Jado Trader***, a 180 foot freighter intentionally sunk in 1984. The wreck lies on her starboard side in 110 feet of water, her port side is 80 feet below the surface. Large Black Groupers will often escort you to and from the wreck. Three friendly Green Moray Eels live there and pose willingly for pictures. The hull is filled with Silversides that part to form living, shimmering corridors for you to swim through. **Black Rock** was our optional second morning dive. An eerie underwater maze of tunnels opens suddenly into an underwater cathedral illuminated with streaming beams of light from openings in the ceiling. That afternoon we dived **Pinnacles**, a majestic site featuring tiny Lightbulb Tunicates protruding from the wall. At Pinnacles' base, a dramatic arch shelters Spotted Drums and French Angelfish.

TUESDAY: Cayos Cochinos is a cluster of two islands and several small cays that feature numerous dive sites loaded with tiny creatures. **Toon Town** teemed with

AGGRESSOR CRUISES

JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU L'AVENTURES 1997

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Fiji Aggressor	August 11 to 18
Okeanos Aggressor	October 18 to 26

Jean-Michel Cousteau/Team Nikonos

Turks & Caicos Aggressor	June 14 to 21
Cayman Aggressor III	August 23 to 30

JIM CHURCH/STAN WATERMAN 1997 PHOTO COURSES

Okeanos Aggressor
July 5 to 14

Palau Aggressor II
April 20 to 27
April 27 to May 4
October 5 to 12

Truk Aggressor II
April 13 to 20
May 4 to 11
October 12 to 19

1997 JIM CHURCH PHOTO COURSES

Cayman Aggressor III
August 9 to 16

Fiji Aggressor
October 27 to November 3

1997 CLAY WISEMAN PHOTO COURSES

Belize Aggressor III
August 23 to 30

Turks & Caicos Aggressor
November 1 to 8

1997 STAN WATERMAN PHOTO COURSES

Bay Islands Aggressor III
January 18 to 25

Kona Aggressor II
May 31 to June 7

Cayman Aggressor III
July 19 to 26

Fiji Aggressor
September 8 to 15

Belize Aggressor III
December 6 to 13

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Weight in water:	**0.6 kg/1.32 lb housing body with N90, Nikon 60mm f/2.8 lens and Macro port 60.**
Operating Depth:	**75m/246 ft.**

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BAY ISLANDS AGGRESSOR III

macro life, including Fingerprint Flamingo Tongues, frogfish, Bluebell Tunicates that resemble bunches of grapes, eels, colorful hermit crabs and seahorses. The night diving was fantastic. Finding macro subjects was the captain's speciality and one of the other crew members was the undisputed octopus finding king.

WEDNESDAY: For something different, we dived **Little Coco's Seamount**, a home for schooling fish, pristine sponges and spectacular coral formations. At Cayos Cochinos' **Pelican Point**, we found nudibranchs, Slender Filefish, Spotted Drums and Fingerprint Flamingo Tongues in abundance.

THURSDAY: We were back at Roatan, this time diving the west end. **Half Moon Bay Wall** has an elegant sand-chute that flows over the wall. Camouflaged Peacock Flounders, Scrawled Filefish and numerous blennies were everywhere. At **Eel's Garden**, named for the many eels that live there, we looked for schools of Squid along with octopus and Toadfish.

FRIDAY: The south side of Roatan offers the wreck of the ***Captain G***, an old wooden shrimp boat that has become a busy artificial reef. Large gorgonians provided the perfect background for wide angle photographers and Harold, the resident seahorse, captivated everyone.

THE BOAT

The dive deck of the *Bay Islands Aggressor III* covers the aft third of the main deck. Large gear lockers, which double as seats, line the rails and center. Two scuba tanks are mounted at the rear of each locker. You can easily don your backpack and tank while seated on your locker. Or, ask that your tank be taken to the dive platform.

Also on the dive deck is a large, three-tiered camera table with ample space for assembling camera systems and changing film.

The 22 foot wide swim step is just above water level. Once you are in the water, one of the crew will hand you your camera. After the dive there is a freshwater shower on the dive platform and a warm towel waiting as well as the chef's fresh-baked snacks. The crew rinses your camera in fresh water; it will be awaiting you on the camera table.

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Vessel	Length	No. of Divers	Cruise Length	Price*
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Galapagos Aggressors I/II Ecuador	80'	14	6 to 10 days	$2,195 (6 days)
Kona Aggressor II Hawaii	80'	10	6 days	$1,695
Okeanos Aggressor Costa Rica	120'	21	9 & 10 days	$2,495/ $2,795
Palau Aggressor II Palau	110'	16	6 days	$1,995
Truk Aggressor II Truk Lagoon	110'	14	6 days	$1,895
Turks & Caicos Aggressor	100'	16	6 days	$1,495

**Special cruises, such as those with Jean-Michel Cousteau, Stan Waterman or Jim Church, cost more but there are also cruises offered at discount rates—ask when you book! **In operation starting June 1, 1997.*

The *Aggressor*'s photo department provides rental camera equipment and accessories and can save a flooded Nikonos. The resident photo pro is an experienced model and an expert on local photographic lore. He or she can tell you where and how to find underwater subjects and which lens is best for each. The photo pro also processes E-6 color

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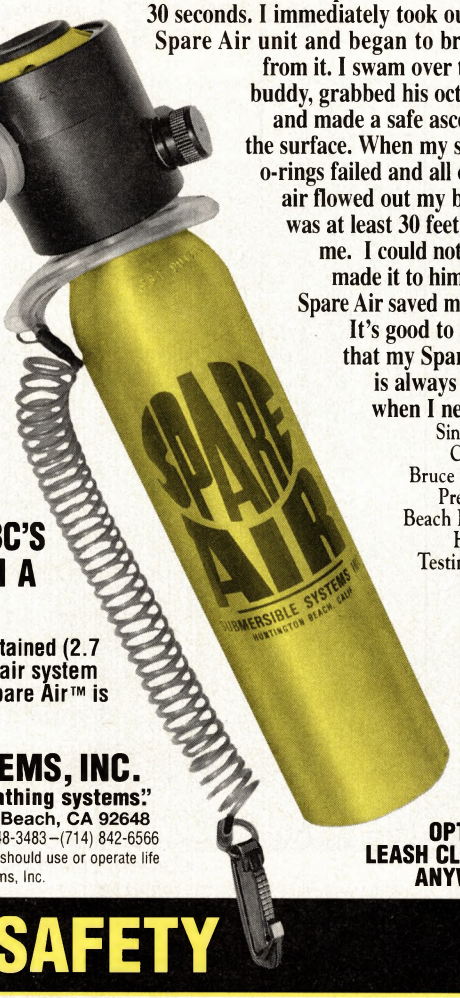

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slides daily. The captain doubles as the video pro and shoots individual and group videos.

CONCLUSION

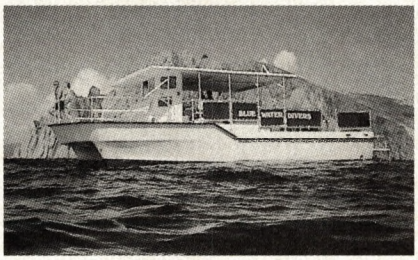
On Friday evening, my shipmates and I enjoyed cocktails and dinner at a restaurant overlooking French Harbor. We talked about the pleasant times we'd enjoyed and promised to book a return trip on the *Bay Islands Aggressor III*. On Saturday morning, crew members took us to the airport and, after many sad farewells, we left this diving paradise. (We would've been a lot sadder if we weren't so sure we'd be back!)

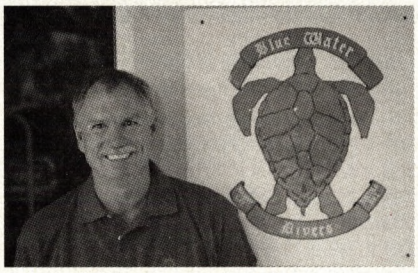
For more information on the *Bay Islands Aggressor III* or any Aggressor Fleet vessel, contact the company at P.O. Drawer K, Morgan City, LA 70381; (800) 348-2628, (504) 385-2628 or fax (504) 384-0817. You can send e-mail to divboat@aol.com; 103261.1275@compuserve.com or visit the Web Site at **http://www.aggressor.com**.

NANNY CAY

(Continued from Page 77)

rent the tanks and weights and dive from your own boat. A full selection of rental gear is available, so you can dive without bringing any of your own equipment.





Above: Blue Water Divers boat at Painted Walls. Below: Michael Royle, aka Muffy, is the owner and operator of Blue Water Divers.

The BIC Windsurfing Center at Nanny Cay features a huge selection of boards and sails. On a protected bay blessed by steady breezes, the center is well suited to both beginner and advanced windsurfers. Like other sports, Nanny Cay offers a learn to windsurf package that can be custom tailored.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

U.S. citizens need only a certified birth certificate and photo ID but a passport is always recommended. The official currency is the U.S. dollar and the electrical current is 110 volts. The easiest route to Tortola is through San Juan, Puerto Rico, with one of the major carriers. American Airlines offers nonstop service from many U.S. travel hubs to San Juan, with American Eagle providing the final connection.

For reservations, contact Nanny Cay Resort at (800) 742-4276 or e-mail nanresv@caribsurf.com. For more information about the resort or packages offered, call (914) 424-3535. Information is also available by e-mail at mpoulter @caribsurf.com and on the Internet at **http://caribbeantravel.com**. The mailing address for Nanny Cay Resort is P.O. Box 281, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

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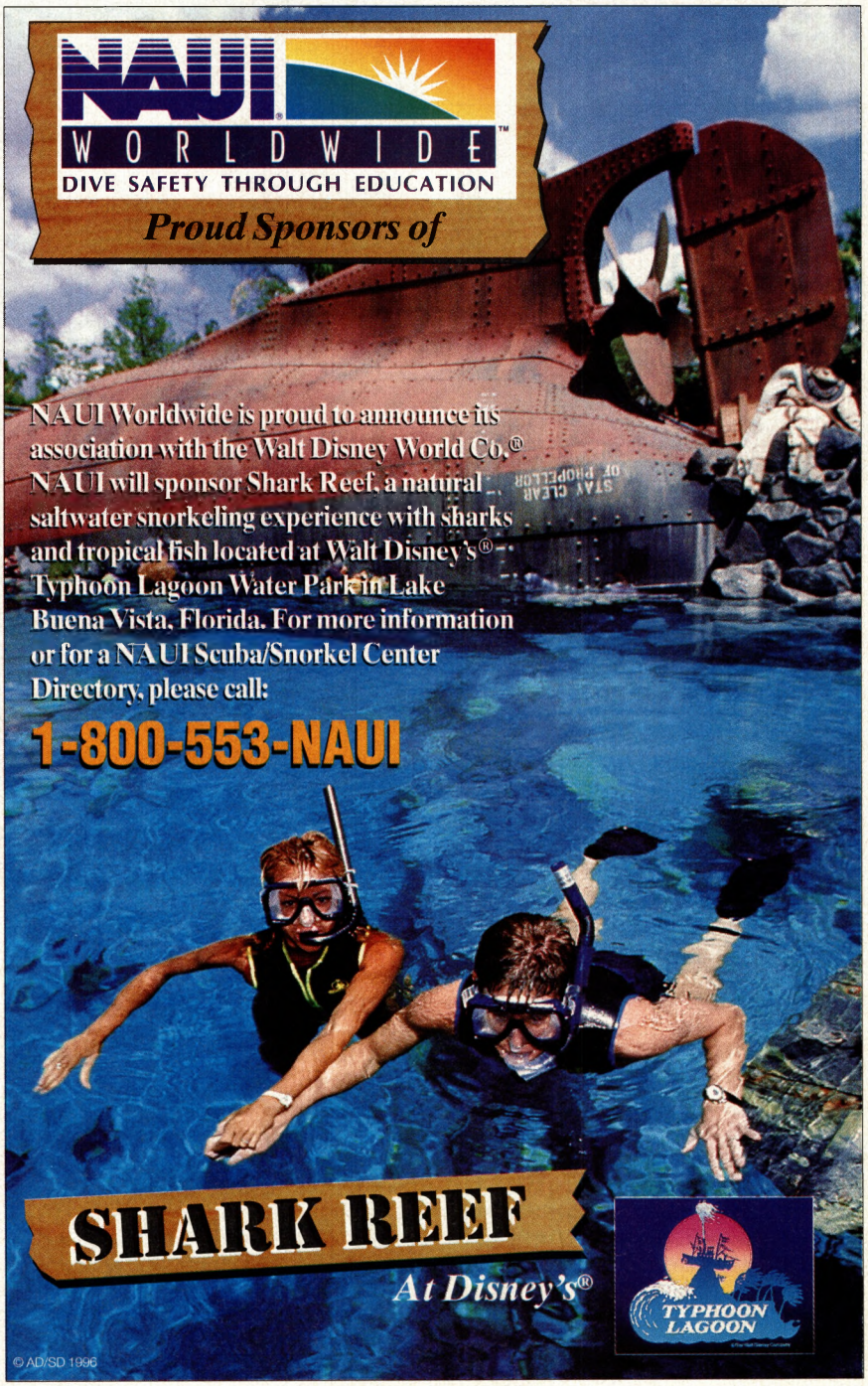

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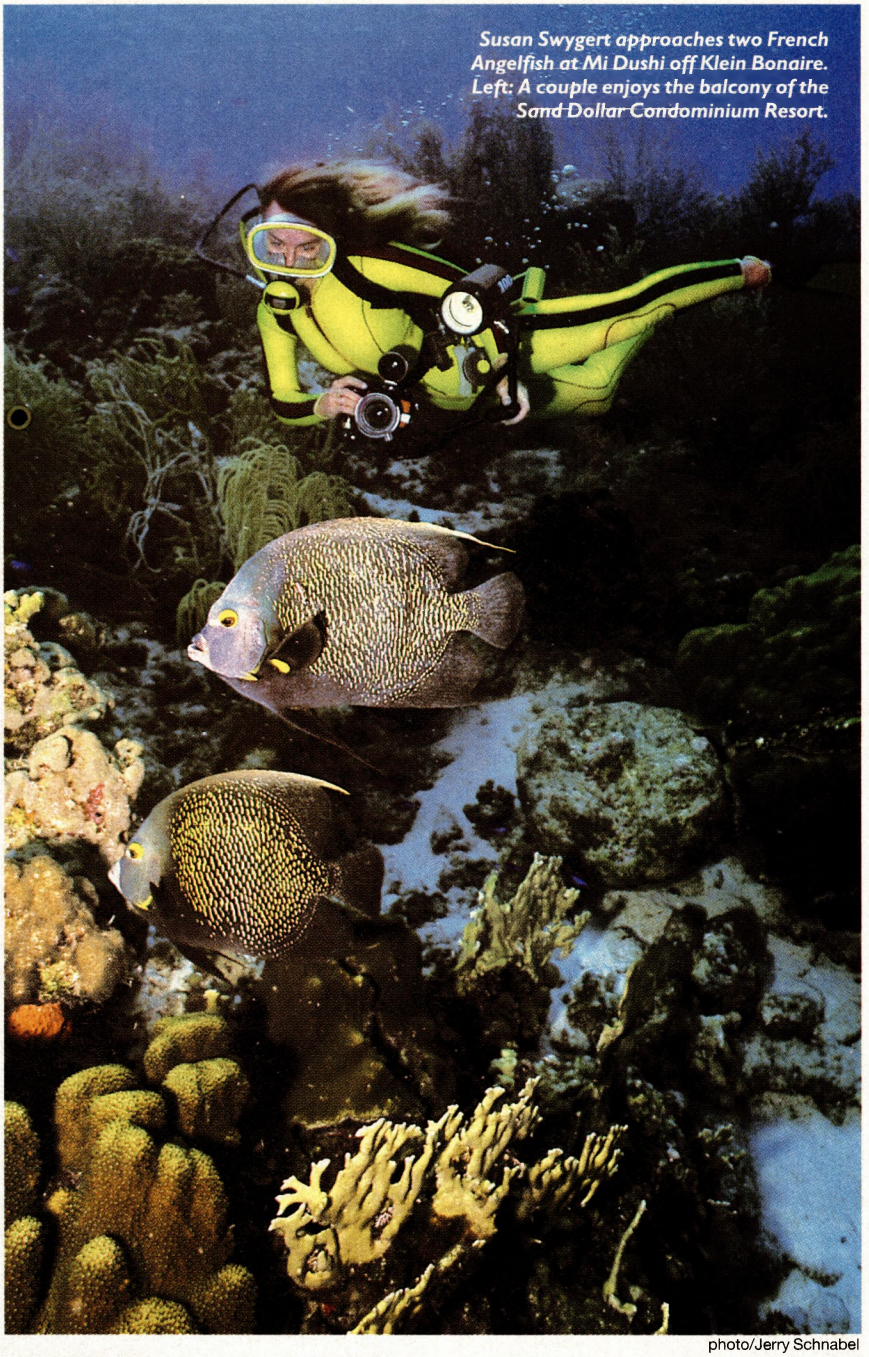


Susan Swygert approaches two French Angelfish at Mi Dushi off Klein Bonaire. Left: A couple enjoys the balcony of the Sand Dollar Condominium Resort.

photo/Jerry Schnabel

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSAN L. SWYGERT

Sand Dollar Condominium Resort and Bonaire's most popular dive and photo operation, Sand Dollar Dive and Photo, have just passed a major milestone—they celebrated their tenth anniversary. The initial visitors to Bonaire's first condominium resort arrived in late 1986. They were greeted on the dock by Bonaire's own Andre Nahr. He started his dive shop with a small staff of four and one boat. Today, Sand Dollar Dive and Photo has 34 staff members and four boats.

Bonaire, one of the world's top dive destinations, is off South America, far below the tropical hurricane belt. Well known for her year-round good weather and miles of leeward coastline that ensure easy shore diving and snorkeling sites, Bonaire's lush coral reefs are just offshore. The reefs are populated by many colorful species of fish and invertebrates that have been protected by the Bonaire Marine Park since 1979. The first of its kind in the Caribbean, it has successfully maintained a no anchoring and no spearfishing policy. All divers—visitors and residents alike—pay an annual marine park admittance fee of $10 U.S.

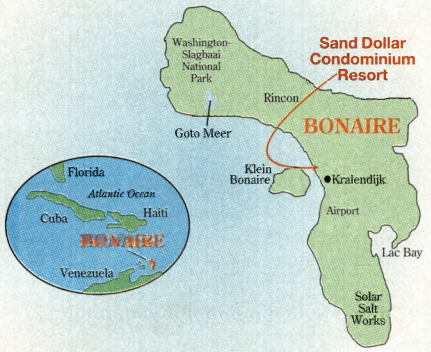
Within view of the seaside Sand Dollar Condominium Resort is uninhabited Klein Bonaire, with additional spectacular dive sites. Sand Dollar Dive and Photo's speedy boats depart at 8:30 and 10:45 am and 1:30 and 3:30 pm. Right in front of the resort, **Bari Reef** is a great site for unlimited day and night diving. Schools of Bonefish, Crevalle Jack and Snook cruise the reef. Sand Dollar's naturalist, Jerry Ligon, leads free fish identification snorkel tours every Sunday and Tuesday. This resort is family oriented and has two great programs for children. The Sand Penny Club has supervised activities for younger children all morning and the Ocean's Classroom will guide older kids and teens through snorkeling excursions and junior scuba certification courses.

Jim Brandon and Julie Morgan are the management team for the photo operation, one of the best equipped shops in the Caribbean. Underwater photography and videography instruction are available from basic through advanced and Morgan also does custom videos for individuals and groups. Julie recently told me, "We have a lot of fun underwater and everyone gathers to watch the show in our viewing room after the dive. There's lots of laughter and I'm glad the divers will be able to remember and share Bonaire after they go home."

Nahr's instruction and activity program have continued to develop and now include dive and photo specialties, naturalist tours and specialties, a guided

snorkeling program, special children's programs, as well as ocean kayak and mountain bike excursions. There is even an all new Bonaire Adventure Package that offers a whole new way to see and enjoy the natural beauty of Bonaire.

There are entertaining and educational slide shows three evenings a week after dinner. Photo pro Jim Brandon identifies beautiful marine creatures and explains photographic techniques; assistant dive manager and avid amateur photographer Ronald Simonis shows the beauty and variety found so easily on Bari Reef; and naturalist Jerry Ligon points out the diversity of Bonaire's topside flora and fauna.



Tim Webb, the resort's general manager, feels Sand Dollar is an "ideal accommodation for families, groups and individuals that want to relax and enjoy a beautiful tropical ambience." All 73 charmingly appointed apartments have ocean views. They range from air-conditioned studios to, one, two or three bedroom condos with full sized, modern kitchens and private balconies or terraces. The property also includes a small white sand beach, freshwater pool, tennis courts, bank, grocery store, ice cream shop, Baranka Tours office and an ABCar Rental facility. Bonaire's well-known Green Parrot Restaurant features great food, good drinks and reasonable pricing. A new chef and menu have been added recently and friendly owners Sara Matera and Jim Hough just continue to improve on a good thing.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Bonaire is best known for:

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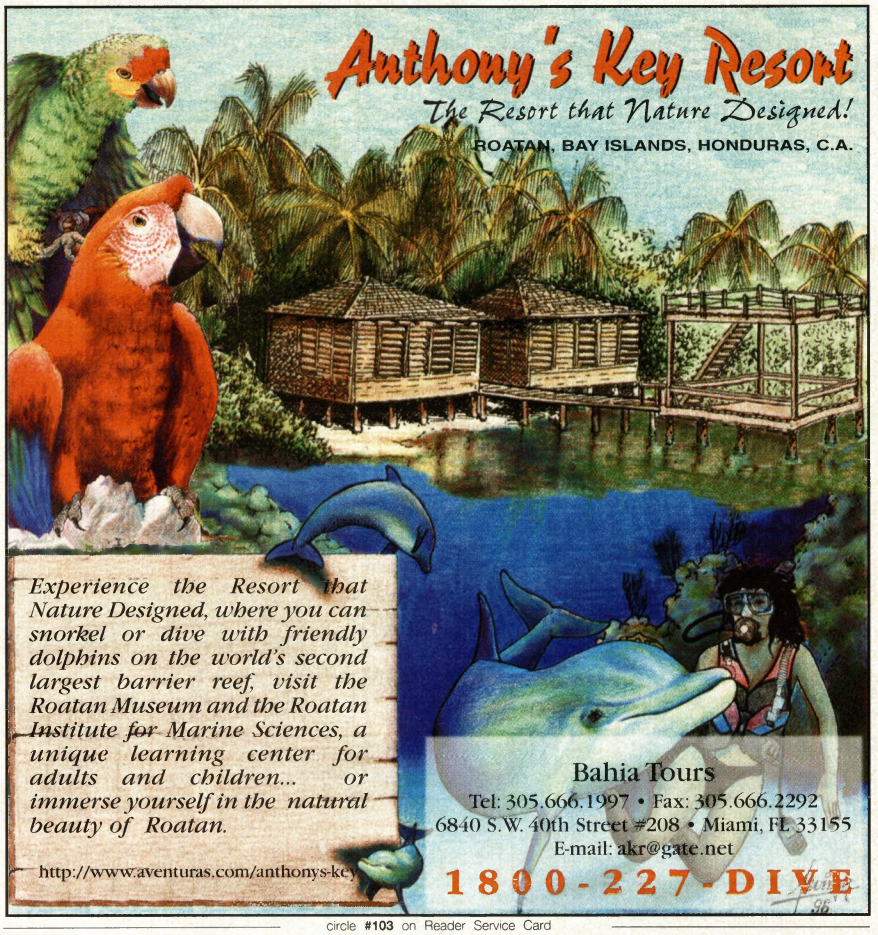
During your next trip, why not try Sand Dollar's unique home away from home resort on Bonaire? Sand Dollar Condominium Resort is an official Nikonos Shootout host. For brochures, further information and/or reservations, call Sand Dollar Reservations at (800) 288-4773, (407) 774-9292 or fax (407) 774-9322. You can write to P.O. Box 3253, Longwood, Florida 32779. The on island telephone number is (011) 599-7-8738; the fax is (011) 599-7-8760.



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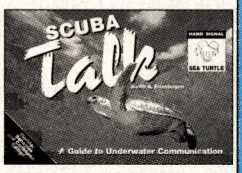

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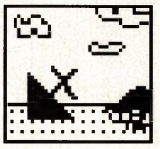

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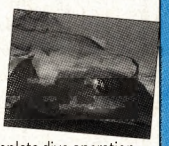

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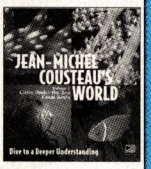

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Taveuni's Garden Island Resort

A Modern Eden Beckons Divers on a Budget

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY TAMMY PELUSO

Top inset: Fairy Basslets fill the nutrient rich water that supports plumes of pastel soft corals. Background: A deserted beach washed by aquamarine seas and fringed by jungle foliage provides a brief respite for Rainbow Reef Divers passengers.

When money is not an issue, it's easy to find quaint oceanfront accommodations in even the most remote destinations. When you're on a budget, however, the options are a bit slimmer. For some reason, tropical islands are typically lacking cozy oceanfront, moderately priced, Comfort Inn equivalents. Luckily there are exceptions; simple, unpretentious seaside retreats that take a back seat to the natural surroundings. In the Pacific, one of the best values for divers is beautiful Garden Island Resort. Small, charming and affordable, it is on the doorstep of Fiji's best diving.

Traditional in design, Garden Island Resort is similar in atmosphere to a family motor lodge (with a Fijian flair). At Garden Island Resort you'll find everything you really need: comfortable rooms, plentiful food and spectacular scenery. Garden Island's 28 rooms are strung out along the water's edge in a simple two story structure that extends off the main lobby, restaurant/bar and gorgeous seaside pool. The restaurant serves an array of local specialties and the bar offers an unbelievable sunset view across the Somo-somo Strait toward Vanua Levu. Every evening a talented local band croons its melodic island tunes.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Garden Island Resort is best known for:

- Charming affordability
- Hiking trails through lush rain forest
- Spectacular soft corals
- Pelagic creatures, including a shark dive at The Supermarket

Just minutes away from extraordinary diving, Garden Island Resort quickly became a hit with divers when it opened in 1989. But Garden Island's real appeal is its accessibility to all of Taveuni's wonders on land and underwater. Taveuni, known as the Garden Island, is blanketed with lush rain forest, extending from the island's 4,000 foot peak to the edge of the sea. Scattered within the green sea of peaks, ridges and valleys are plantations, villages, towns, resorts, endless miles of hiking trails and more than 80 waterfalls.

Garden Island Resort is less than 20 minutes from all the best diving so morning dive charters typically return to the re-

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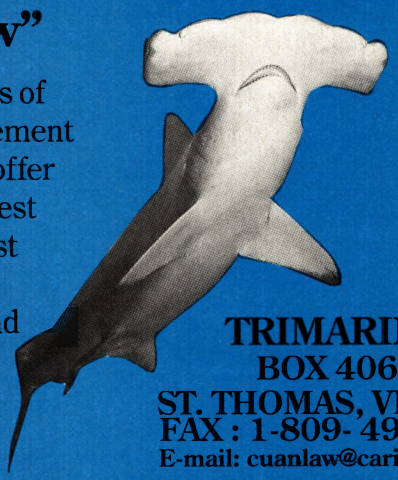

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TAVEUNI'S GARDEN ISLAND RESORT

sort in time for lunch, leaving the afternoon free to dive, do nothing or explore. Although you would need several weeks to see all of Taveuni, or at least several full days to do some of the longer walks, it is possible to venture out in the afternoons and get a good feel for the island. The resort arranges a variety of tours, including rain forest treks and excursions to waterfalls. Visits can also be arranged to local Fijian villages, an old Catholic mission and an ancient warrior burial cave. Several must do attractions are within walking distance: the Waitavala Waterslide—a natural slip-sliding ride; and the International Dateline (180th meridian), about one-quarter mile south of the hotel.

Garden Island Resort provides 28 cozy rooms and a restaurant/bar in a two story structure at the water's edge.

The extensive selection of activities at Garden Island Resort makes it one of Fiji's best options for serious divers traveling with families or nondiving companions. Fun activities are scheduled throughout the day and paddleboats, kayaking, tennis, golf and horseback riding are available. A water taxi offers scheduled service to beautiful Korolevu Island, a snorkeling haven frequented by a pod of dolphins.

Garden Island Resort was recently purchased by Aqua-Trek, one of Fiji's most respected operators. Aqua-Trek has two successful dive operations in Fiji's western region. At present there are no major changes planned for the resort except for minor renovations and redecorating. Aqua-Trek's U.S. based office makes booking Garden Island Resort much easier.

Diving services at Garden Island Resort are offered by Rainbow Reef Divers, an independent company owned by Dave Dickinson. The dive shop is well stocked with all the necessities. Two 30 foot custom crafted aluminum dive vessels are on hand to transport guests to Taveuni's legendary diving; each boat can take up to 12 divers. Two tank charters depart each morning; afternoon dives, night dives and scuba instruction are also available. The staff is knowledgeable and service-oriented; dive gear is loaded onto boats in the morning before guests arrive and washed after the last dive. Prepare to be spoiled.

Dive charters typically venture to sites along Taveuni's celebrated **Rainbow Reef**, renowned for its majestic soft coral gardens. Rainbow Reef is not one site but more than 20 stretching across the Somosomo Strait—a narrow channel between Taveuni and Vanua Levu. The strong currents that wash through this channel each day as the tides rise and fall feed extraordinary coral gardens, accounting for Taveuni's distinguished reputation as "The Soft Coral Capital of the World."

Although soft coral is prevalent along the entirety of Rainbow Reef, there is a remarkable variety of formations on both the patch reefs and walls. Each has its own unique maze of canyons, caverns, ledges and tunnels. It is the soft coral, however, that gives each site a distinctive personality, often blanketing entire reefs in a single solid hue. The **Yellow Tunnel** is completely lined with gold and the illustrious **Great White Wall** is a sheer drop-off draped in a translucent gauze of white soft corals. Some of the other soft coral hot spots include **Annie's Bommie** and **Blue Ribbon Eel Reef**, where the coral is plentiful and Fairy Basslets, dressed in regal orange and violet robes, swarm.

For those looking for big critters, there is the **Fish Factory** and **The Zoo**—an action packed drift dive. There is usually a current and there are always Barracuda and sharks, especially off the point where the currents are the strongest. Hammerheads and Bronze Whalers are commonly seen along with Yellowtail Tuna, Eagle Rays and, occasionally, giant Manta Rays, which cruise in like space ships.

Aqua-Trek's western facilities are in Nadi, the gateway to Fiji, and on Mana Island, home of **The Supermarket**, the west's infamous shark dive. Mana Island Resort, an exclusive island hideaway off the western coast of Viti Levu, is easily accessible by plane or ferry. If you are staying in Nadi you can shuttle over for the day to make the shark dive. Both Aqua-Trek facilities offer retail sales, gear rental, scuba instruction and dive charters. Aqua-Trek's Nadi location is a nitrox instructor training facility, offering the full range of enriched air courses and service.

Contact Aqua-Trek direct for additional information and literature on Garden Island Resort, Rainbow Reef Divers or its dive operations in the western region. Call Aqua-Trek in the U.S. at (800) 541-4334 or send e-mail to info@aquatrek.com. In Fiji, you can contact Garden Island Resort and Rainbow Reef Divers at 011 (679) 880286/880544 or fax 011 (679) 880288.

FIJI BOUND

Flights to Fiji are available through Air Pacific and Qantas. The nonstop Air Pacific flight from Los Angeles to Fiji's International Airport in Nadi takes approximately 10 hours. The outer islands can be reached via the local carriers, Air Fiji and Sunflower.

Air Pacific
(800) 227-4446
Qantas Airlines
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Air Fiji
(800) 677-4277 (in U.S.)
Sunflower Airlines
(888) DIVE FIJI (in U.S.)

DIVE PROVO

(Continued from Page 45)

12 glorious and uninterrupted miles along the north coast of Providenciales. The resort's 228 rooms and full gaming casino are nestled among 30 acres of tropical landscaping. The three Tur-

Dive Provo's fleet includes three Pro 42s.

photo/courtesy Blue Whale Photo & Video

quoise Reef restaurants, Portofino, Coral Terrace and Buddies Bar and Grill, provide a nice range of dining experiences. The large pool and terrace overlook the beach, where Dive Provo also provides many other watersport opportunities, including windsurfing, Hobie Cat sailing, sunset cruises and deepsea fishing. The resort also takes kids' fun seriously. Kids on Vacation is their professionally administered children's club,which has become a real hit with the young ones.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

American Airlines covers the 575 miles from Miami to Provo twice in a day in less than 90 minutes. U.S. citizens can travel with a certified birth certificate and photo ID or a passport. Money and electricity are the same as in the U.S. For clothes, bring the three Ss: shorts, shirt and sandals.

For more information, call (800) 234-7768 in the U.S. From other locations, call (954) 351-9771 or fax (954) 351-9740. The Dive Provo e-mail address is diveprovo@netrunner.net.

Dive Notes

HIGHTIDE WATERSPORTS: Hightide Watersports of Barbados has opened its new dive shop at the Boatyard in Carlisle Bay. With this addition to the original facility at the luxurious Sandy Lane Hotel, Hightide Watersports covers all the great Barbados sites from North Point to South Point. Willie Hewitt, the owner and manager of Hightide, says the new shop is also convenient to the spectacular shallow wrecks of Carlisle Bay. The ride to the triple wreck site of the *Berwyn*, *C-Trek* and *Eillion* is so short it's hardly worth sitting down. Whatever your experience level, Hightide can take you to sites such as Silver Bank, Maycocks Bay and the famous *Stavronikita* for the best diving in Barbados.

The Hightide Watersports boats will provide a comfortable ride to any dive site. At Sandy Lane, the 32 foot custom built *Flyin' High* can whisk you out to the dive sites at 20 knots. With reliable diesel power, an open transom for easy entries, freshwater shower and dry storage for personal gear, this boat is one of the finest on the island. The same attention to detail has gone into the Hightide boat at the Boatyard location, which will have a maximum capacity of eight divers to avoid that feeling of diving in a crowd.

For more information call Hightide Watersports of Barbados at (800) 513-5763, (246) 432-0931 (phone/fax) or (246) 228-3322.

NITROX AT COCO ISLAND: In a revolutionary development, *Sea Hunter* and *Undersea Hunter* are now completely equipped for nitrox fills. Classes in nitrox and rebreather diving are also offered during the cruise.

The 120 foot *Sea Hunter* accommodates up to 18 divers. The 90 foot *Undersea Hunter* hosts groups of 12 to 14. Both vessels feature large fiberglass chase boats with twin outboard motors and rigid tank racks to protect gear.

Coco Island is the ideal place for diving with mixed gas. Since schooling Hammerheads at Coco are found at depths of 40 to 110 feet, nitrox has certain advantages.

For further information, contact See & Sea Travel, 50 Francisco Street, #205, San Francisco, CA 94133; (415) 434-3400, fax (415) 4343-3409, e-mail divxprt@ix.netcom.com or visit on the Internet at http://www.divxprt.com.

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NMS MOVES: The sanctuary office has moved yet again! It has taken up residence in the Federal Building in historic downtown Bryan, Texas. Please update your records to reflect the following changes: Flower Garden Banks NMS, 216 W. 26th Street, Suite 104, Bryan, Texas 77803; phone (409) 779-2705, fax (409) 779-2334 or e-mail to sgittings@ocean.nos.noaa.gov or sdupuy@ocean.nos.noaa.gov.

Bay Islands Beach Resort

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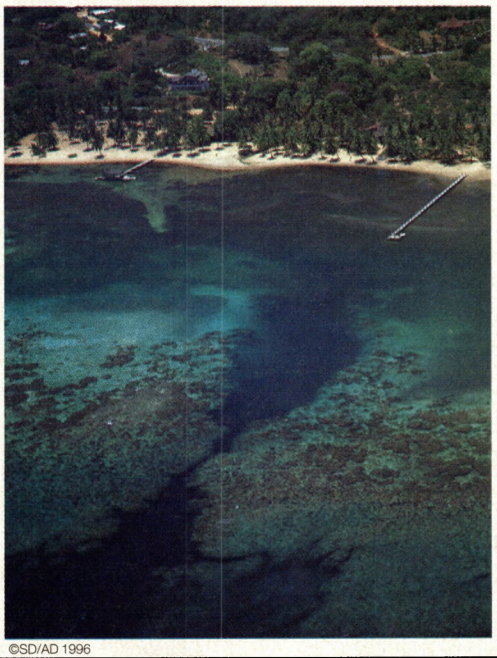

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At the Bay Islands Beach Resort on Roatan, Ted and CamO'Brien have created the perfect balance between a highly professional full-service dive operation and a laid-back, intimate bed-and-breakfast style dive resort. With only 24 - 38 guests each week, it is easy for them to adjust schedules, meals, and activities to their guests' desires. The resort's highly successful "Rent The Entire Resort" plan allows dive clubs and shops, group leaders and scuba instructors use of the resort's facilities and staff. An ideal place to take groups!

Bay Islands Beach Resort is 44 acres of panoramic waterfront and hillside within the Marine Reserve. A two-story Spanish-style plantation house and beach villas sit amidst beautifully landscaped property with fruit and nut trees, flowers and towering coconut palms. Just off the beach is the famous Spooky Channel, one of the best shore (and boat) dives on the island.

Swim through an eerie crack in the reef which opens onto the breath-taking wall. Or snorkel along the pristine reef and view the spectacular display of fishes and corals.

Eight-day packages include seven nights' air-conditioned accommodations, 16 boat dives (two in the morning, one in the afternoon, one night dive), unlimited shore dives and three delicious meals a day. Festivities featured are the Tabiyana Beach picnic trip, Land Crab Safari, the traditional lobster buffet and Limbo and Punta Party with music and dancing on the beach.

BOOK IT! Group leaders call for "Rent The Entire Resort" details. An individual seven-night package is $725 pp/do; non-divers, $650 pp/do. Call your local dive shop or Bay Islands Beach Resort toll-free at **(800) 4 ROATAN or (561) 624-5774, fax (561) 624-7751.**

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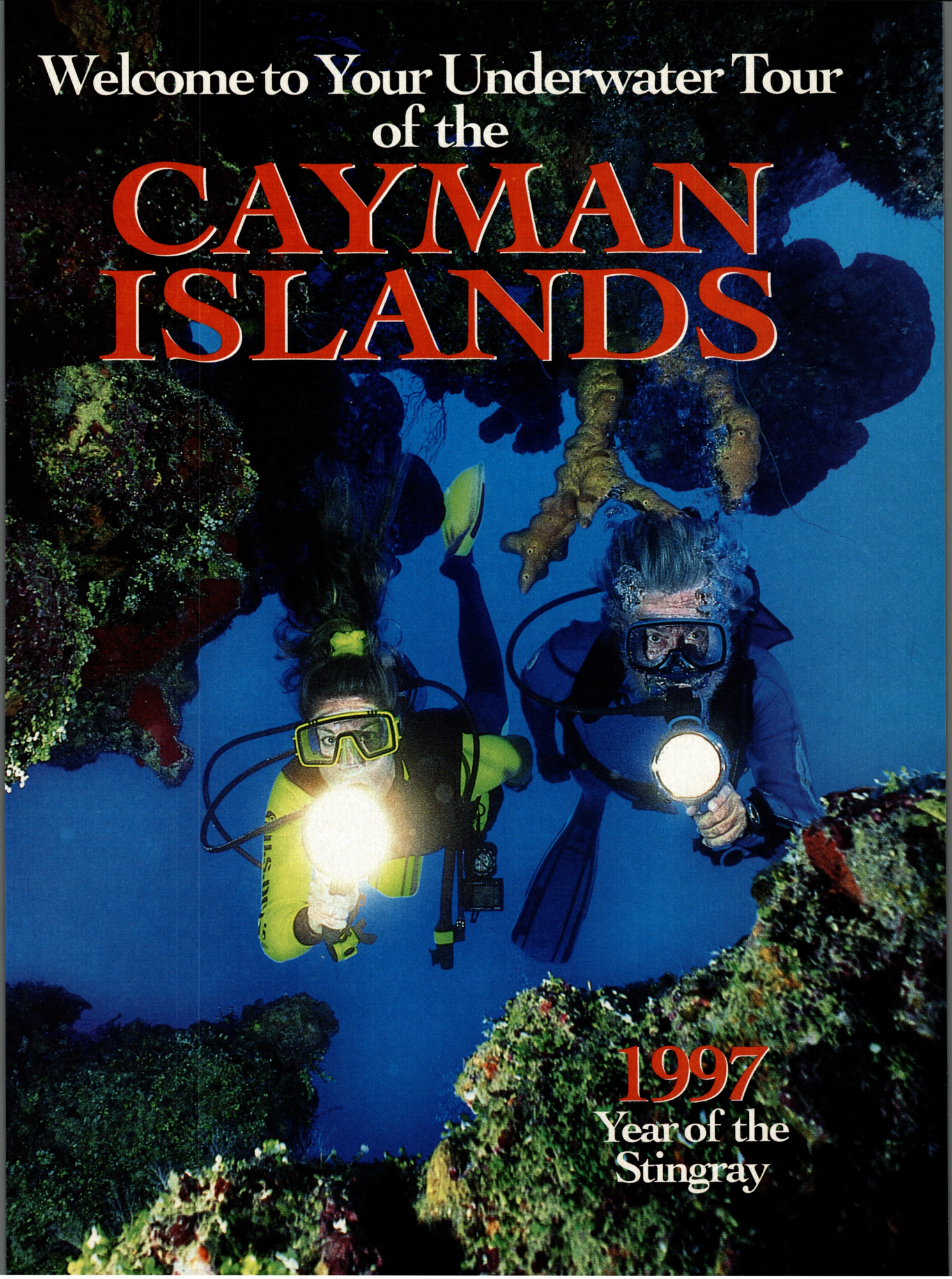
Welcome to Your Underwater Tour of the CAYMAN ISLANDS



1997
Year of the Stingray

NEXT STOP, ADVENTURE!

Keep your hands & feet in the water at all times!

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

Above: Balloonfish (Diodon holocanthus), Sunset Reef, Grand Cayman.

Background: Angel Reef, Grand Cayman.

Welcome to the Cayman Islands. This trip is different; it begins underwater. We are going to take you on a tour of three of the most gorgeous islands of the Caribbean and show you why this tropical paradise is considered one of the finest diving locations in the world.

Before we begin, let's go over the basic facts as to why these three little islands attract more vacationing divers than any other place on earth. The following are the 12 most compelling reasons to visit and dive the Cayman Islands:

1 Deliciously warm water: These islands lie deep in the heart of the western Caribbean—a tropical zone where the water temperature is delightfully warm year-round. Underwater temperatures range from 79°F in the winter to 85°F in the summer and there is no thermocline. The water is just as warm at 100 feet as it is near the surface.

2 Calm water conditions: Surface conditions are remarkably calm. On many mornings the ocean is as smooth as glass. And, even when the wind stirs, there is always a leeside or protected portion of the islands where diving conditions remain calm. Diver sea sickness is unknown here.

3 Crystal clear visibility: Underwater visibility is absolutely stunning, consistently ranging from 80 to 100 feet among the inshore dive sites and often reaching 200 feet along the outer edge of the drop-off. The Cayman Islands are comparatively flat and have no rivers or waterfalls. As a result, there is no rain runoff or soil erosion. The islands are surrounded by living coral reefs that filter the waters and keep them clean.

4 Zero to little current: Diving is an absolute pleasure and extremely safe, as there is virtually no current on the shallow and medium depth reefs and just a slight current (one-quarter to one-half knot) on some wall dives. There is also no surge since these islands are rarely exposed to heavy sea swells.

5 Shark free waters: No one knows exactly why but the Cayman Islands are virtually shark free. I have made more than 1,000 dives in the Cayman Islands and encountered a shark only once.

New divers feel especially safe and secure, knowing there are no sharks beyond the next coral head.

6 Fabulous wall diving: The Cayman Islands invented, and then perfected, the art of wall diving. Few Caribbean islands can offer the kind of breathtaking vertical diving the Caymans can. These magnificent undersea cliffs are draped with colorful tapestries of sponges, gorgonian fans, Black Coral trees and 1,000 other delicate forms of marine life. All three

Cover photo:
Exploring Grand Cayman's North Wall.
Photo/Geri Murphy

Stingray City, Grand Cayman

Your Underwater Tour of the CAYMAN ISLANDS...

islands are blessed with vertical walls that encircle their shorelines.

7 Fascinating grotto and tunnel diving: The coral reefs surrounding these islands are honeycombed with an intricate maze of shallow water grottos, winding tunnels, narrow crevices and sunlit caves—endless opportunities for scuba exploration. Unlike normal cave diving, these undercoral systems are alive with marine life of all kinds. The canyons and tunnels are painted with brightly colored encrusting sponges and often filled with Black Coral trees and giant gorgonians. The grottos and caves are favorite hiding places for swarms of Silversides (baitfish). Visitors can often observe remarkable interaction as Tarpon, groupers and jacks feed on these fish schools.

8 Fantastic array of exotic sponges: The Cayman Islands have often been proclaimed the "sponge capital of the Caribbean." There is no augment these islands possess some of the largest Barrel Sponges in existence—some measure ten feet tall. Basket sponges also grow to massive size, with some measuring eight feet across. Yet the most impressive attraction is the amazing variety of rare red vase sponges (sometimes called Blood Sponges) that can be found in a wide spectrum of hues, ranging from scarlet red to brilliant orange to strawberry pink or many shades in between.

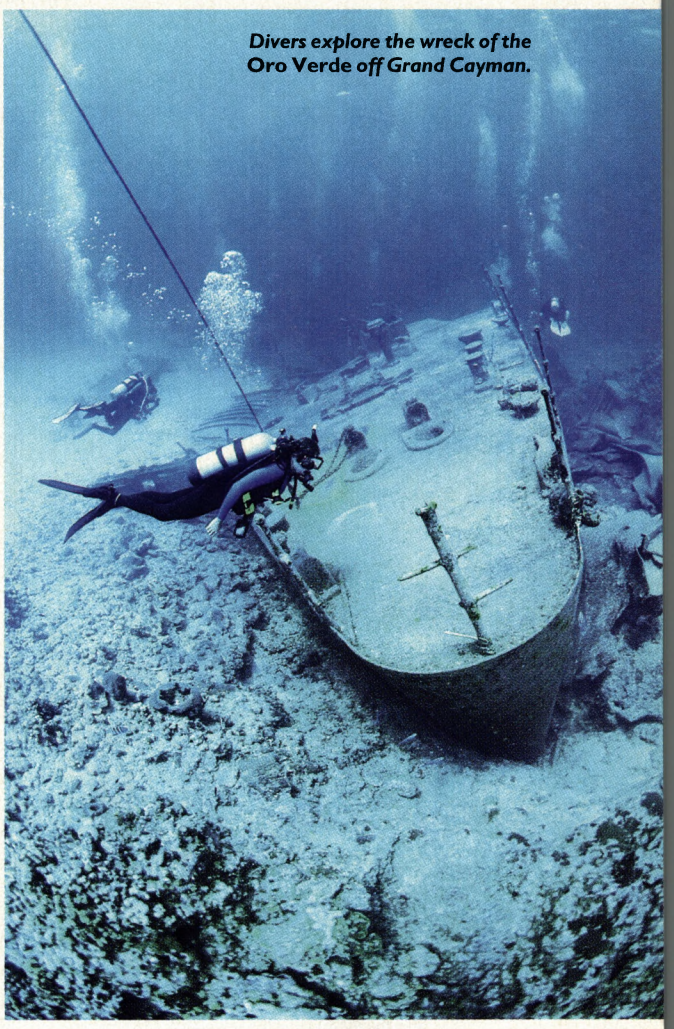
9 Extraordinary wreck diving: The Cayman Islands offer a full menu of wreck diving opportunities, as all three islands have divable shipwrecks.

Grand Cayman's best known wrecks include the ***Balboa***, which sank in the hurricane of 1934 and the ***Oro Verde***, which was sunk as an artificial reef in 1970. Both are easily accessible from Seven Mile Beach and the *Balboa* is considered the best night dive.

Little Cayman has the ***Soto Trader***, a steel hulled freighter sunk off the South Shore and a good dive when the wind is blowing from the north. Cayman Brac has several wrecks but the one that has catapulted this island to international fame is the recently sunk Russian warship, now renamed the ***Capt. Keith Tibbetts***. This wreck is a fully intact 330 foot long vessel complete with deck guns!

10 Abundant marine life: By far the most compelling undersea attraction of the Cayman Islands is its remarkable collection of approachable marine life. Nowhere else in the Caribbean can a diver get so close to so many different kinds of fish and aquatic animals. At **Stingray City** divers can play bumper cars with 12 to 15 tame stingrays at one time. Green Sea Turtles can be encountered at almost every dive site and at some locations they are even handfed. Schools of giant Tarpon are seen and photographed at many reef sites, as the divers swim through these sedate schools. Spotted Eagle Rays can be found cruising along the drop-offs, often traveling in formations of four to six animals in elegant flight. Angelfish (all three Caribbean species) are exceptionally tame, often nuzzling against the diver's facemask. Other coral reef species seen consistently include Scrawled Filefish,

Longlure Frogfish—Trinity Caves, Grand Cayman.



Divers explore the wreck of the Oro Verde off Grand Cayman.

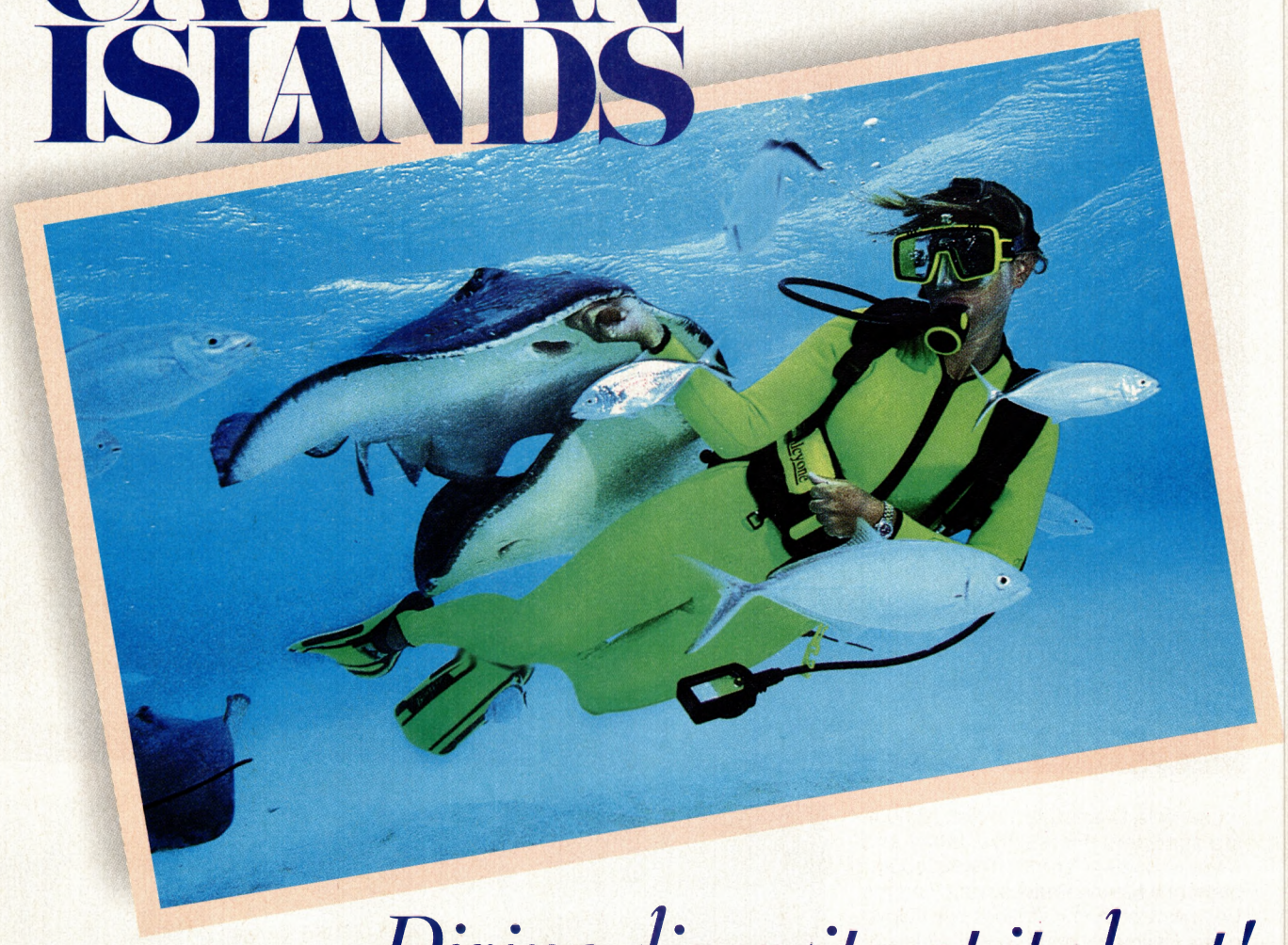
moray eels, Barracuda, hogfish, schooling snappers, Horse-eye Jacks and many schools of grunts. The establishment of a Marine Parks system and the frequency of diver visitations has helped make Cayman's marine life the friendliest in the Caribbean.

11 Short boat rides: One of the most enticing aspects of Cayman Islands diving is the short boat rides. The vertical drop-off that surrounds these islands runs parallel to the shoreline—100 yards to one-quarter mile off the beach. Boat rides are exceptionally short, as the dive operators have strategically positioned their departure points close to the best sites. Boat rides can be as short as five minutes, while the average is 15 to 20 minutes. This type of easy access allows visitors to make two dives in the morning (before lunch) and even afternoon dives. Night dives are equally convenient.

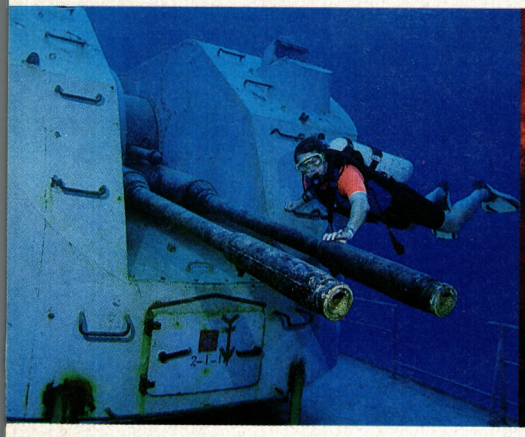
12 Quality shore diving: When it comes to shore diving, these islands offer some of the best in the Caribbean. The absence of rivers, beach erosion and rain runoff have produced exceptionally fine inshore diving. Healthy, abundant living coral reefs

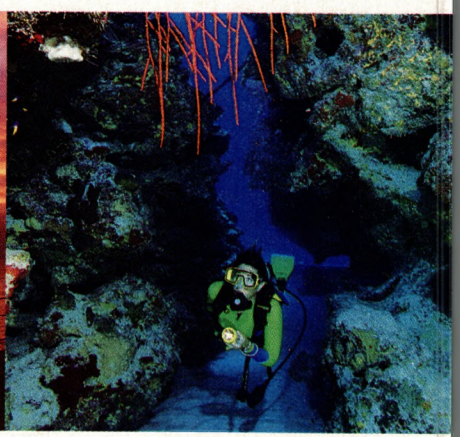
Schoolmasters—Rhapsody Reef, Grand Cayman.

CAYMAN ISLANDS



Diving diversity at its best!





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"Bob Soto's Diving is the Cinderella story of resort diving services," according to *Skin Diver* Magazine. Cayman's only PADI 5 Star Development Center, Bob Soto's has more than 30 dive packages to choose from with preferential airfares, accommodations & dive options. Dive packages with accommodations, PP/Dbl, start as low as $299. Fly Cayman Airways, our national carrier. Complement superb Cayman diving with truly outstanding customer service. Repeat customers rate our dive experts #1 in friendly, professional service. It all starts with only One Call to our Reservations Hotline. 1-800-BOB SOTO. Fax: (345) 949-8731. E-mail : bobsotos@candw.ky

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Hyatt Hotels, Grand Cayman

Discover the island's most complete resort, centerpiece to world-class service and all that Grand Cayman has to offer. Located on the 90-acre Britannia golf club, this 236 deluxe room resort offers exclusive villas, private Beach Club, marina and public ferry to Rum Point Beach. Dive packages and an on-property water sports facility are available. Complete diving, snorkeling and water sports service through Red Sail Sports. Call 1-800-233-1234.

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Southern Cross Club, Little Cayman

The Caribbean the way it used to be - secluded and undisturbed. Step from your private oceanfront beach cottage onto one of our comfortable dive boats, *Coral Star* and *Coral Sun.* Experience Little Cayman with a maximum of ten (10) divers per boat. IANTD Nitrox facility - Learn Nitrox Here. Res/info: (800) 899-CLUB (2582) E-mail: scc@candw.ky home page: http://scubacentral.com/scc.html.

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Discovery Point Club, Grand Cayman

"Where your vacation dreams become a reality"

Located directly on our famous Seven Mile Beach, enjoy your luxurious getaway in a one or two-bedroom oceanfront condo, or a garden view studio. Relax on your screened patio and enjoy the tropical island atmosphere. Our freshwater pool and jacuzzi are located on the beach where you can experience Grand Cayman's spectacular sunsets...truly unforgettable evenings. P.O. Box 439, West Bay, Grand Cayman, BWI. Phone : 345-945-4724; fax : 345-945-5051.

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Almond Beach Hideaways, Cayman Brac

Unspoiled Cayman Brac's newest deluxe accommodations–designed by divers for divers. Spacious two-bedroom villas, fully-equipped, air conditioned, on a secluded, palm-shaded, white sand beach. Dive our spectacular coral reefs just steps from your door! Superb dive vacation values start at only $638 per person. Includes 7 night villa lodging and 5 days of world class diving on the colorful reefs and sheer dropoffs of the Brac and Little Cayman. Free brochure. Call 1-800-972-9795, fax 541-426-4863.

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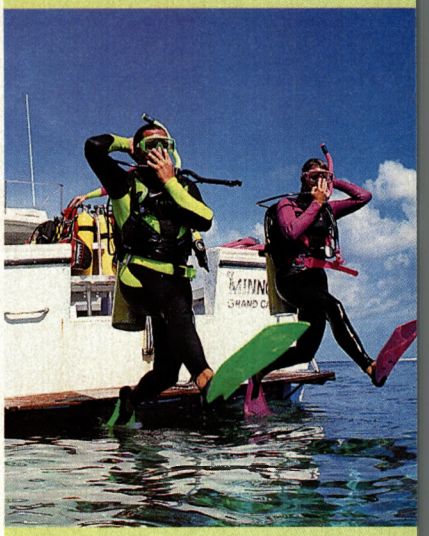

SCUBA SERVICES

GRAND CAYMAN

Ambassador Divers	(800) 648-7748
Aquanauts Ltd.	(800) 357-2121
Beach Club Divers	(800) 482-3483
Bob Soto's Diving Ltd.	(800) BOB SOTO
Calico Jacks	(345) 949-4373
Capitol's Surfside	(800) 543-6828
Capt. Marvin's	(345) 945-4590
Cayman Aggressor III	(800) 348-2628
Cayman Dive College	(345) 949-4125
Cayman Diving Lodge	(800) TLC-DIVE
Cayman Diving School	(345) 949-4729
Cayman Marine Lab	(345) 945-5586
Celebrity Divers	(345) 949-3410
Clint Ebanks Scuba	(345) 949-3873
Crystal Clear Divers	(345) 949-3730
Dive Inn Ltd.	(800) 872-7552
Dive 'n Stuff	(345) 949-6033
Dive Time Pirates Inn	(345) 947-2339
Divers Down	(345) 945-1611
Don Foster's	(800) 833-4837
Eden Rock Diving	(345) 949-7243
Fisheye of Cayman	(800) 887-8569
Indies Divers	(800) 654-3130
Neptune's Realm	(345) 949-6444
Ocean Frontiers	(800) 544-6576
Off The Wall Divers	(345) 947-7790
Ollen Miller	(345) 947-6606
Parrots Landing	(800) 448-0428
Peter Milburn	(345) 945-5770
Quabbin Dives	(800) 238-6712
Quabo Dives	(345) 945-4769
Red Sail Sports	(800) 255-6425
Rivers Sport Divers	(345) 949-1181
Scuba Sensations	(800) 767-0445
Seasports	(345) 949-3965
Seven Mile Watersports	(345) 949-0332
Soto's Cruises	(345) 945-4576
Spanish Bay Reef	(800) 482-3483
Sunset Divers	(800) 854-4767
Tortuga Divers Ltd.	(800) 748-8733
Treasure Island Divers	(800) 872-7552
Turtle Reef Divers/Divetech	(345) 949-1700

CAYMAN BRAC

Brac Aquatics Ltd.	(800) 544-2722
Dive Tiara	(800)367-3484
Reef Divers	(800) 327-3835

LITTLE CAYMAN

Little Cayman Diver II	(800) 458-2722
Paradise Divers	(345) 948-0001
Pirate's Point	(345) 948-1010
Reef Divers	(800) 327-3835
Sam McCoy's	(800) 626-0496
Southern Cross Club	(800) 899-2582

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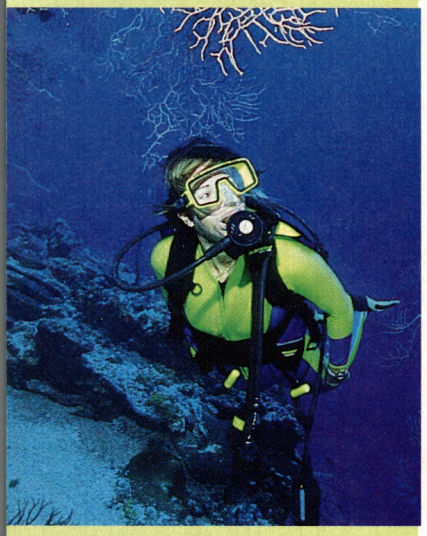

U/W PHOTO & VIDEO

GRAND CAYMAN

Cathy Church	(345) 949-7415
Fisheye of Cayman	(800) 887-8569
Ocean Photo Center	(345) 949-6607
Parrots Landing Photo Ctr	(800) 448-0428

CAYMAN BRAC

Ed Beaty's Reef Photo	(345) 948-1340
Photo Tiara	(345) 948-1553

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Underwater Images	(345) 948-1033

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GRAND CAYMAN

Abanks' Watersports	(345) 945-1444
Atlantis Submarines	(800) 887-8571
Bayside Watersports	(345) 949-3200
Best Value Charters	(345) 949-1603
Black Princess Charters	(345) 949-0400
Blackbeard's Nancy	(345) 949-8988
Blue Chip	(345) 947-0184
Capt. Bryan's	(345) 949-0038
Capt. Crosby's	(345) 947-4049
Capt. Gleason Ebanks	(345) 945-2666
Cali Wreck Snorkel	(345) 949-6161
Captain Marvin's	(345) 945-4590
Cayman Delight	(345) 949-8111
Cayman Mama	(345) 916-1847
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Cayman Skyriders	(345) 945-5965
Cayman Sunset	(345) 949-3666
Cayman Windsurf	(345) 947-7492
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Dallas Ebanks	(345) 945-4340
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Kirk Sea Tours, Ltd.	(345) 949-6986
Malcolm's Watersports	(345) 949-1323
Ocean Safari, Ltd.	(345) 947-9561
Oh Boy Charters	(345) 949-6341
One Day at a Time	(345) 947-2244
Peacemaker Charters	(345) 916-2478
Planet Ocean	(345) 949-9423
Sailboards Caribbean	(345) 949-1068
Seaworld Explorer	(345) 949-8534
Standin' Tall	(345) 947-2348
Stingray City	(345) 949-9200
Sundancer Cruises	(345) 945-1726
Wet & Wild	(345) 949-9180
Whittaker's Sportfishing	(345) 916-0944

CAYMAN BRAC

Capt. Edmund Bodden	(345) 948-1228
Capt. Frankie Bodden	(345) 948-1428
Capt. Lemuel Bodden	(345) 948-1314
Capt. Steve Bodden	(345) 948-2517
Shelby's Charter Boat	(345) 948-0535

LITTLE CAYMAN

Chip McCoy's	(345) 948-0026

Red Sail Sports, Grand Cayman

Diving is at its best with Red Sail Sports, now at three exciting locations (Hyatt and Westin on Seven Mile Beach and Rum Point on the north side of the island). Daily dive trips visit spectacular walls, reefs, and wrecks aboard custom dive boats boasting freshwater showers, restrooms, rinse tanks and more. Our scuba school offers a wide range of courses. Accessible for handicapped divers. Wide variety of packages including accommodations at the Hyatt, Westin, Grand Pavilion & Christopher Columbus Condominiums. Two new packages now available at Rum Point - Cayman Kai Resort and The Retreat condominiums. Call about our amazing fall special package - September through December. Reservations 1-800-255-6425.

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Cayman Diving Lodge, East End, Grand Cayman

Adventure diving at Grand Cayman's untamed East End. Enjoy the best diving in the Cayman Islands! Small dedicated diving lodge located on our private beach. All services including dive operation on-site. All-inclusive packages. Open air bar & dining area. Escape the cruise crowds & tourist diving and live the Cayman of Yesterday. Our live-in staff will quickly become your friends and you will soon become part of our family. 800-TLC-DIVE. Fax 806-798-7568. http://caymandivelodge.com.

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Don Foster's, Grand Cayman

Don Foster's Dive Cayman's three 7 Mile Beach locations, including their newest at the Holiday Inn Grand Cayman, offer an exciting variety of walls, wrecks, reefs, Stingray City and night dives. Boats depart from the beach at all locations with free pick-up available. Watersports & retail shops, daily snorkel trips, Resort Courses, plus a complete U/W photo center compliment Don Foster's services. For reservations, call 1-800-83-DIVER/(972) 722-2535; fax: (972) 722-6511; or E-mail: dfdus@airmail.net

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Indies Suites/Indies Divers, Grand Cayman

INDIES DIVERS offers a highly-personalized service on two custom-built dive boats serving the North and West Walls and Stingray City. 12-diver maximum, camera tables, video and photo services and illustrated dive briefings. Located at INDIES SUITES — Cayman's only all-suites dive hotel. Accommodation/dive packages available. Call 1-800-654-3130.

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Treasure Island Divers and Dive Inn

North, South, East, West, Treasure Island Divers and Dive Inn offer trips to all four sides of the island. Our professional and friendly staff offer guided dives, or you can explore on your own with extended bottom times for computer dives. We have three custom 45 foot dive boats—so big you'll never feel crowded. We offer a full-service dive shop, lockers, video/photo services and a full range of educational courses from resort to full certification. We're also a PADI 5 Star IDC Center. Call toll-free 1-800-872-7552 for air, land and diving packages. Fax 954-351-9740. E-mail: tidivers@netrunner.com.

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Brac Aquatics & Brac Caribbean, Cayman Brac

Brac Aquatics, the island's oldest & most experienced dive operator, has teamed up with Cayman Brac's newest & by far finest full service luxury resort. We dive a vast variety of spectacular sites, including Little Cayman your way! Our prices & services will spoil you forever! Call for unbelievable packages & prices in hotels, villas, condos & private homes. Or, try the ultimate, LITTLE CAYMAN DIVER II, a former 90 foot mega-yacht. Very personalized with only 10 divers maximum in 5 cabins, each with private head & shower. BRAC AQUATICS, P.O. Box 273781, Tampa, FL 33688-3781. Or call: 1-800-544-2722;813-962-2236 or Fax: 813-264-2742.

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Villas of the Galleon, Grand Cayman

Villas of the Galleon Condominiums has received the top rating of "Excellent" by the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism for the second year in a row. Our condos are well appointed, Daily Maid Service except on Sunday. All units are fully equipped, Central A/C, T/V, Patios or Balconies. Each unit has a view of the renowned Seven Mile Beach. We offer 1, 2, and 3 bedroom condos. Perfect vacation spot for everyone whether you are on your honeymoon, a family reunion, singles, groups, we have the right condo for you. For more information call your travel agent or 345-945-4433 or fax 345-945-4705.

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Cathy Church's Underwater Photo Centre & Galleries

Cathy Church's photo centres are the world's best U/W photo centres. You'll be thrilled with your photos taken during a fun, afternoon U/W photo course or highly acclaimed eight day, full-service course May-August 1997. Private instruction with Cathy year round. Free mini-lesson and best prices on Nikonos, Sea & Sea and video rentals. Professional E-6 film processing and fast, reliable Nikonos repair. Visit our galleries of breathtaking photos at affordable prices. At Sunset House and Coconut Place, P.O. Box 479, Grand Cayman, BWI. Phone: (345) 949-7415, fax: (345) 949-9770. E-mail : Cathy@cathychurch.com. Visit our website at http://www.cathychurch.com.

Sunset House, Grand Cayman

Sunset House, known as Grand Cayman's #1 hotel FOR divers BY divers, gives you everything you need for the perfect dive vacation: 6 custom dive boats, a full-service dive shop with 12 professional instructors, dedicated Scuba School, photo centre, restaurant, freshwater pool, jacuzzi and seaside thatched-roof bar/patio—all just a few steps from your room. After an exciting dive at one of more than 150 available dive sites, you can relax over a tropical drink as you watch the sunset from our seaside patio. Package rates available. P.O. Box 479GT, Grand Cayman, BWI. Call 1-800-854-4767 or 345-949-7111. Fax: 345-949-7101.

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Coconut Harbour, Grand Cayman

Waterfront dive hotel overlooking the ocean and some of Cayman Islands' most beautiful reefs. Fabulous shore diving and a variety of boat dives are available. Pool view and oceanfront studio apartments feature air-conditioning and kitchenettes. A restaurant, open-air bar, freshwater swimming pool, whirlpool, pro-dive shop are all on site. Call (800) 552-6281 or (345) 949-7468.

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Eden Rock Diving Center, Grand Cayman

The gateway to Cayman's greatest natural wonder. Explore the tunnels and caves or glide over the coral. You'll find it miraculous that Eden Rock and Devils Grotto are so close to shore.

Custom made dive packages are available that combine the best in boat and shore diving. You can make the choice of unlimited diving or an executive plan that offers a relaxed diving vacation. We offer a complete range of PADI, NAUI, BS-AC and SSI courses.

Ph: 345-949-7243. Fax 345-949-0842. Internet edenrock@candw.ky.

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Paradise Villas, Little Cayman

Paradise Villas Resort is a full service resort that offers six oceanfront duplex cottages that line the shore, overlooking the water some fifty feet away. The Hungry Iguana Restaurant, serving tempting lunches and dinners daily, and Paradise Divers who will give you a taste of Little Cayman's spectacular diving experience. Call direct (809) 948-0001 or fax (809) 948-0002.

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Reef Divers, Little Cayman & Brac Reef Beach Resorts

Jacques Cousteau dubbed Bloody Bay Wall "the best site in the entire Caribbean," and Fred Garth, Editor-in-Chief, Scuba Times Magazine states, "For a single dive site, I'd say Bloody Bay Wall...it's incredibly dramatic..." See for yourself! Dive Bloody Bay Wall, the Capt. Keith Tibbetts Wreck, breathtaking walls and wrecks with prolific marine life. Photo Pros assist you to capture the magic and expert Divemasters guide you. Reef Divers located on premise at each resort, has the newest fleet of custom designed dive boats. The resorts feature all the latest amenities that keep guests coming back. Call 800-327-3538 or fax 813-323-8827. Website : www.braclittle.com.

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Jil Foster International Real Estate

A Successful Former Cayman Dive Operation Owner, Knowing the Needs of Divers

With a Solid Reputation in Cayman's Business Community.

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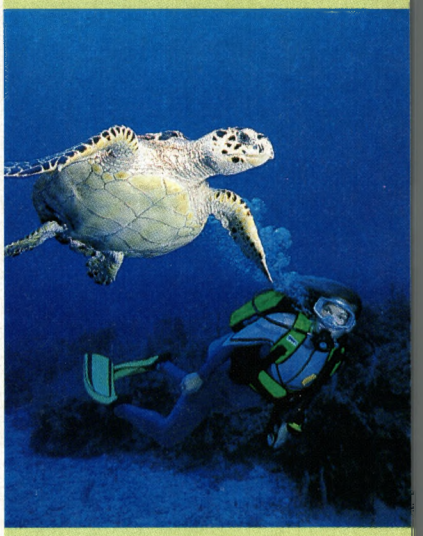


To receive a FREE copy of the colorful 20-page 1997 DIVE GUIDE, STINGRAY CITY 10th Anniversary Video, and the all-new Cayman Islands Discount Book, send the enclosed reply card or mail your name and address to :

CAYMAN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
6100 Blue Lagoon Drive. Suite 150. Miami. FL 33126.

GRAND CAYMAN	345-949-0623
CHICAGO	847-678-6446
HOUSTON	713-461-1317
LOS ANGELES	213-738-1968
MIAMI	305-266-2300
NEW YORK	212-682-5582
CANADA	416-485-1550
SPAIN	93-414-0210
GERMANY	69-60-320-94
UNITED KINGDOM	171-491-7771
ITALY	02-4801-2068
JAPAN	81-3-3546-1754
FRANCE	1-53-424100

"Those who know us. love us."

Your Underwater Tour of the CAYMAN ISLANDS...

come within 20 yards of the shoreline and visibility can range from 80 to 100 feet. In many cases, dedicated dive resorts and diving facilities have been built at specific shore locations because of the adjacent coral reefs.

These 12 natural attractions form the basic foundation for the success of the Cayman Islands as the Caribbean's best diving destination. In fact, few places on earth can offer this remarkable combination of high quality diving and easy access. Needless to say, there are many more reasons for visiting the Cayman Islands, such as the great selection of hotel and condo accommodations, the professional level of diving services, the immense choice of dive operators, the enhanced services for underwater photography and videography, the fine selection of restaurants, as well as the entertainment, sightseeing and shopping. The Caymans have it all and you can have as much or as little as you desire. See for yourself by checking in at the Cayman Islands World Wide Web site at **http://www.caymans.com**.

GRAND CAYMAN

Our tour begins on Grand Cayman, the largest and most developed of the three Cayman Islands.

This island offers a wide selection of accommodations, ranging from luxury beach resorts to million dollar vacation condos to dedicated dive resorts to economically priced bed and breakfasts and guesthouses. The island offers every imaginable form of outdoor recreation, including sailing, sunset cruises, windsurfing, riding personal watercraft, waterskiing, parasailing, golf, tennis, swimming, snorkeling and a dozen other sports.

As for diving, Grand Cayman is, without a doubt, the scuba Mecca of the Caribbean, offering world-class diving and enjoyable learn to dive classes. There is nothing quite as rewarding as taking a scuba lesson in the swimming pool in the morning and diving on a clear shallow coral reef in the afternoon.

What makes Grand Cayman so grand are the unlimited diving opportunities. The island is actually the tip of a submerged mountain peak and measures 22 miles long by 8 miles wide. It is surrounded by coral reefs and a vertical drop-off (better known as the wall). This amounts to roughly 60 miles of divable reefs, wrecks and walls.

There are four distinct regions for diving, corresponding to the geographic sides of the island: West Wall, North Wall, South Wall and East End. Each is totally different. Combined, the four sides of Grand Cayman offer great variety, calm diving conditions and superior opportunities for animal encounters.

GRAND CAYMAN FACTS

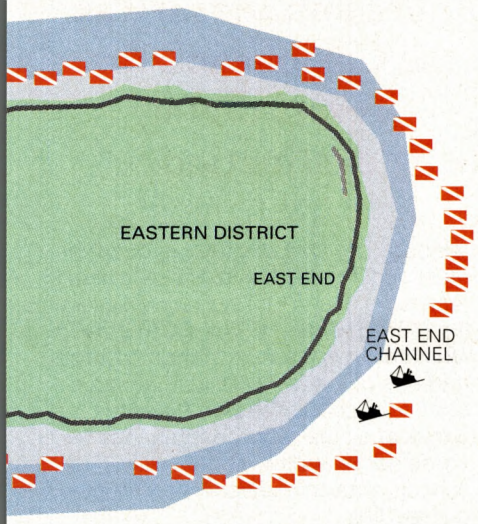
LOCATION: 480 miles south of Miami, 1,220 miles southeast of Houston
LENGTH: 22 miles
WIDTH: 4 to 8 miles
ELEVATION: 60 feet/flat limestone island
CLIMATE: Sub-tropical, balmy
TEMPERATURE: November to April—70/85°F May to October—80/90°F
ROADS: Paved
POPULATION: 29,500 residents
LANGUAGE: English
GOVERNMENT: British Crown Colony
CAPITAL: George Town
BANKS: 450, international offshore banking center
TIME ZONE: Eastern Standard Time; does not observe Daylight Saving Time.
ACCOMMODATIONS: 20 hotels, 50 condos/apartments

GRAND CAYMAN/WEST WALL

First stop on our underwater tour is the West Wall, which parallels Seven Mile Beach and George Town—the island's greatest concentration of dive operators and resorts. Of all the regions around Grand Cayman, the West Wall offers the greatest variety of diving experiences: walls, caverns and grottos, wrecks, shores, night diving and rare animal encounters.

West Wall is also the easiest area to dive because of the short boat rides and extremely calm surface conditions. Prevailing trade winds come from the north and east, thus the west side is in a protected lee. On most early mornings you can look out the window of your hotel or condo and gaze upon a glassy calm sea.

WALL DIVING: The morning dive trip generally starts with a wall dive—on the West Wall you are blessed with a wide selection of 26 vertical sites. What is particularly notable about this region is each and every wall site is different in profile, dominant marine life and fish action. You could dive the West Wall for two weeks straight and never see the same thing twice.

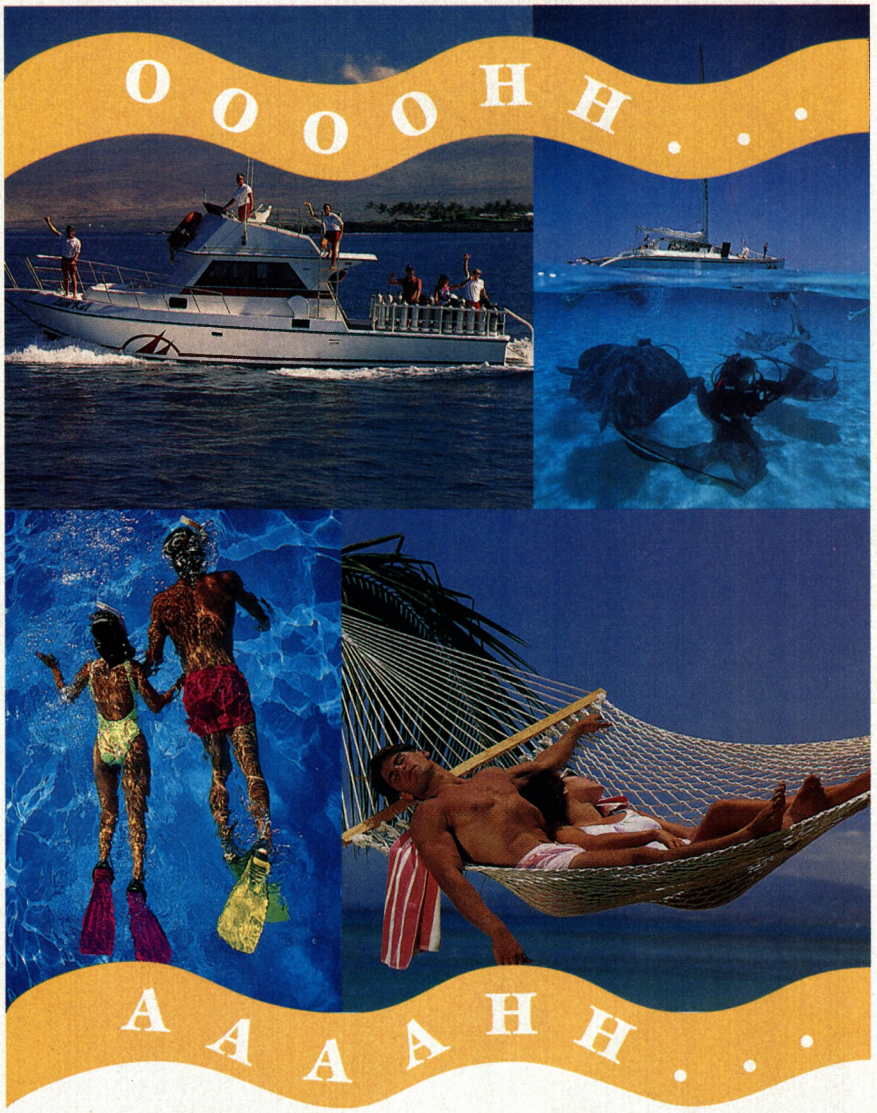


Dive site
Wreck

Map not to scale.

Flags in approximate dive site locations.

SHOPPING: Island crafts, crystal, porcelain, watches, perfume, jewelry, liquor
TRANSPORTATION: Taxis, rental car, tour buses
COMMUNICATIONS: Radio Cayman, daily TV broadcast; Cayman Compass, daily newspaper
ELECTRICITY: 110 volts AC/60 cycles
DEPARTURE TAX: C.I. $8, U.S. $10.



RED SAIL SPORTS

has locations in the world's best dive waters – the Caribbean and Pacific. If you want unforgettable diving, friendly service and custom built dive boats, dive with Red Sail Sports. Dive packages available starting at $214 for a 4 day/3 night stay. *Call today!*

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Advertised rate is based on double occupancy, valid 4/21–12/15/97. Package rates vary at each location. Call for pricing details.

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Your Underwater Tour of the CAYMAN ISLANDS...

Green Moray Eel—Stingray City, Grand Cayman.

Here is just a small sampling of what West Wall offers. At **Trinity Caves**, three coral tunnels converge and empty onto the vertical face of the wall—a great opportunity for swim-throughs and exploration. **Orange Canyon** is a combination wall and natural coral canyon with sides covered with giant Orange Elephant Ear Sponges. **Sand Chute** is an undersea ski slope of fine white sand that slowly slides downward and spills over the lip of a vertical drop-off. The vertical sides of the slope are loaded with large sponges. **Bonnie's Arch** is a natural coral archway 30 feet in diameter and often filled with schooling fish. What all these wall sites have in common is stunning undersea visibility of 100 feet plus, a fabulous collection of soft and hard corals, spectacular sponges and abundant fish life.

REEF DIVING: The second dive of the morning is generally on a shallow to medium depth coral reef. Just inshore, the line of wall diving sites is a secondary line of reef sites—equally well marked by moorings. Diving depths on these sites range from 30 to 50 feet and offer an opportunity to see reef fish in great numbers.

Aquarium is everyone's favorite as this site is comprised of a series of coral ridges and sand valleys loaded with tame French Angelfish. **Rhapsody Reef (Mesa)** is a small coral reef rising 20 feet from a flat sand bottom and absolutely covered with a dozen different schools of grunts and snappers. Beneath these wandering schools are groupers, Trumpetfish, scorpionfish and a dozen more varieties. **Angelfish Reef** is another shallow reef site loaded with friendly Gray and French Angelfish. **Royal Palms Ledge** has a unique coral reef overhang often occupied by Tarpon and groupers. **Sunset Reef** is a favorite for underwater photographers as most of the reef fish are extremely tame and most are willing to have their pictures taken.

WRECK DIVING: The West Wall offers the greatest number of shipwrecks. The ***Balboa*** is the oldest (it sank in 1932) and one of the best night dives in the Cayman Islands. The ***Oro Verde*** has been the most popular wreck and a favorite haunt for a large Green Moray Eel and several Nassau Groupers. The **LCM *David Nicholson*** is a sunken landing barge and one of the few wrecks that can be dived from shore. The ***Doc Polson*** is the wreck of a steel workboat that has become home and haven for sea turtles, schools of juvenile snappers and numerous reef fish.

This year the Cayman Islands are celebrating their 40th anniversary as the Caribbean's first resort diving destination.

CAVES AND GROTTOS: No underwater tour of the West Wall would be complete without a visit to many of the coral caverns and grottos that abound in this region. Many of the shallow reefs are honeycombed with natural tunnels, caves and caverns. These formations are quite safe, as they lie in shallow water (20 to 40 feet) and are fairly well lit by sunlight streaming through the holes and cracks in the reef above. However, if you wish to enjoy these swim-throughs to their fullest, a dive light is recommended so you can enjoy all of the color and fish life contained in these labyrinths.

One of the most famous cave and tunnel systems is **Devil's Grotto**, a network of perhaps 100 winding tunnels, caves

TAKE YOUR PICK...

Dive with Parrots Landing, Grand Cayman's most elite dive facility, and you can select between 25 Hotels and Condominiums all along the 7-Mile Beach area.

Choose from 8 boats to take you to Cayman's magnificent dive sites including the North, South & West Walls and Stingray City.

Parrots Landing even offers an all-day "3-Tank" boat trip for advanced divers who use computers. Plus there are caves, grottos and a 6000 foot wall just a snorkel from our dive shop.

All packages include free tanks for shore diving and a Sunset Sail aboard our 60' Catamaran, so give us a call and take your pick!

PARROTS LANDING
GRAND CAYMAN'S WATERSPORTS PARK
DIVING AND SNORKELLING

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BB&P

CAYMAN HOTELS

	3 Nts	5 Nts	7 Nts
AMBASSADORS	$314	$513	$712
SEAVIEW	$322	$527	$731
CORAL CAYMANIAN	$381	$625	$869
SLEEP INN	$447	$734	$1022
INDIES SUITES	$586	$967	$1347
RADISSON	$624	$1030	$1436
WESTIN	$660	$1090	$1520

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and crevices. At certain times of the year it is filled with thousands of tiny Silversides. They flow through the tunnels like rivers of mercury. **Soto's Reef** is another shallow inshore reef honeycombed with caverns and tunnels. Here you will often find Tarpon and Barjacks hunting for Silversides. More caves and tunnels can be dived at **Pageant Beach Reef** and **Fish Pot Reef**.

SHORE DIVING: One of the alluring aspects of Grand Cayman is the high quality shore diving available at a number of different locations. For those making boat dives in the mornings, this is a great way to supplement your vacation with additional afternoon dives. And, for those on a budget, shore diving is the most economical way to spend those limited dollars.

The West Wall region excels in shore diving, especially in the George Town area. Many dive resorts and shore diving facilities have been strategically positioned adjacent to excellent coral reef areas. One of the best known is Parrots Landing, a shore diving facility that provides easy access to **Parrots Reef** and **Parrots Perch**. Nearby is Eden Rock, another shore diving facility that offers snorkeling and scuba access to **Eden Rock Reef**.

Sunset House is a dedicated dive resort with shore diving access to both Sunset Reef and the LCM *David Nicholson* wreck. Farther south is Coconut Harbour, another dedicated dive resort with beach access to **Waldo's Reef**. Still more shore diving opportunities are available at the Seaview Hotel and Smith's Cove.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS: West Wall is ideally suited for underwater photographers and videographers because this region offers the widest variety of marine life encounters with semi-tame creatures. For example, giant Tarpon can be seen regularly at **Big Tunnel**, Bonnie's Arch, **Royal Palms Ledge**, **Soto's Central** and Devil's Grotto. Green Sea Turtles can be encountered at almost any dive site but are seen regularly along the northern portion of Seven Mile Beach. Flying Gurnards are often found in the shallow sandy areas along the shoreline from Victoria House north along Seven Mile Beach. Giant Green Morays are seen at Waldo's Reef and on the *Oro Verde* wreck. Schools of Horse-eye Jacks can be seen cruising almost any drop-off site on the West Wall, plus Rhapsody Reef, Bonnie's Arch and **Eagle's Nest**.

GRAND CAYMAN/NORTH WALL

Next stop is the North Wall, Grand Cayman's adventure wall for wild diving and extraordinary animal encounters. This region is ideally suited for experienced divers, as well as novices who wish to improve their skills. This section of reefline faces the traditional trade winds so surface conditions are a bit more choppy at times. However, in the summer, the wind often disappears and the surface becomes glassy calm.

North Wall is famous for spectacular wall diving and rare animal encounters. Underwater visibility is almost always 100 feet and on good days can reach as much as 200 feet.

WALL DIVING: Although it may be hard to imagine, the wall diving sites along North Wall are even more spectacular than those at West Wall. Part of this breathtaking panorama is owing to the extended underwater visibility, which allows a diver to see much more of the wall from one place. Add to this expansive feeling the dramatic structures and bold

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profile of these undersea cliffs. It feels as if you are touring an underwater version of the Rocky Mountains.

Of the 30 different North Wall drop-offs, **Eagle Ray Pass** is perhaps one of the most dramatic. It consists of an assortment of deep coral ravines, thundering overhangs, natural archways and a seemingly infinite vertical face. At a site such as this you will find Tarpon hanging under coral ledges, sea turtles cruising along the lip and formations of Spotted Eagle Rays flying parallel to the edge of the wall. The site is truly awesome.

Ghost Mountain is another impressive site consisting of a large coral pinnacle that rises from a sand slope at 140 feet. Schools of Horse-eye Jacks are often seen cruising around this pinnacle. Nearby is another site called **Black Forest**, which consists of three coral pinnacles rising to within 50 feet of the surface. Far to the west are some of the North Wall's finest drop-offs, such as **Leslie's Curl**, **Hammerhead Hill**, **Chinese Wall** and **White Stroke Canyon**. Eagle Rays are seen regularly at all of these sites, often flying in formations of four to six rays. Other animals encountered at these locations include

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Thread-fin Pompano, Wahoo and an occasional manta.

Tarpon Alley is famous for tons of Tarpon. Two long coral crevices run out from the deep sand flats to the lip of the wall and in each of these are 50 to 100 Tarpon. They hang almost motionless in the shadows of these narrow canyons and divers can often swim among them. In addition to Tarpon, giant stingrays, turtles and Barracuda are often found here.

Reef diving: The North Wall is by no means just limited to wall diving. There are numerous shallow sites, such as **Lemon Reef**, **Queen's Throne**, **Andy's Reef** and **Pinnacle Reef**. The formations in this region are somewhat different than those of the West Wall, offering a greater concentration of Elkhorn and Staghorn Corals and, of course, an abundance of Caribbean reef fish.

GRAND CAYMAN/ STINGRAY CITY

Next stop is **Stingray City** in the North Sound—the world's most famous 12 foot dive. The North Sound is a vast expanse of shallow water in a protected bay. It is separated from the North Wall by a natural coral barrier reef. Surface conditions are generally flat calm. Underwater visibility is variable, ranging from 40 feet on an outgoing tide to 100 on an incoming tide.

Because of its nutrient rich shallow waters and protection from the open ocean, North Sound is a breeding ground for an incredible variety of marine life. The entire inland edge of this sound is bordered by mangroves, where you can find seahorses and juvenile reef fish of all kinds. Yet, the most famous aspect of this great bay is Stingray City, a shallow water nursery for an estimated 100 young stingrays and their mothers.

These creatures range in size from 12 inch babies to grandmothers with a five foot wingspan. Just about all of them are friendly and eager for food handouts (squid) from the divemasters.

Tarpon school—Grouper Grotto, East End, Grand Cayman.

Divers and tube sponges— East End, Grand Cayman.

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Main photo: David Wolfe. U/W photo: Cathy Church

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As the dive boat pulls up to the site, stingrays can be seen winging their way toward the stern platform from practically every direction. They have learned to connect the sound of boat engines to the appearance of food. And, as the divers enter the water, these frolicking stingrays cluster around the feeder like pigeons in a park. The jubilant stingrays are exceptionally tame and can be stroked, patted and petted. In fact, divers are often jostled back and forth as the eager rays compete for food. The underwater photo opportunities are extraordinary.

1997 is the 10th anniversary of Stingray City. SDM introduced its readers to the "World's Best 12' Dive" in the September 1987 issue.

As this natural phenomenon has continued to grow, the stingrays have formed bands of 12 to 15 rays. They have spread out into separate areas, thus there is a proliferation of stingray sites. In addition to **Stingray City** there is now also **Stingray Alley**, **Ray Town**, **Sandbar** and **Valley of the Rays**. Yet, despite this segmentation of activity, it all remains under the umbrella of Stingray City, the only place on earth where congregating stingrays occur naturally. These marvelous animals have not been trapped or penned in any way but instead remain there of their own free will.

CONSERVATION LAWS

The residents of the Cayman Islands have long been aware of the importance and the value of their undersea reefs and marine life. Ever since the islands were first settled Caymanians have depended on the sea for their livelihood. Generation after generation has worked on or under the sea as sailors, sea captains, fishermen and now as divemasters. Cayman's present and future depends upon the preservation of this fragile resource.

In 1978, the Cayman Islands government instituted a strict Marine Conservation Law. Its regulations protect many marine life species and also control the means by which more abundant marine life may be taken by traditional fishermen.

The single most important regulation is the prohibition of taking any type of corals or sponges anywhere in Cayman waters by anyone. Violation of this law carries a maximum penalty of a $5,000 fine and one year in prison. As you can see, the Caymanians are serious about marine conservation.

There is also a law strictly prohibiting fishing with any type of poison or other chemicals (such as bleach) and no one may take live fish for the purpose of export for aquariums.

Spearguns and seine nets require a fishing license and are subject to controls as to where they may be used and precisely how many fish may be taken. These fishing licenses are limited to Caymanians and long term residents of the islands. Special areas have been set aside for this type of activity. Maximum limits and minimum size requirements strictly regulate the taking of lobsters (by Caymanians) during a specified season. There is also a maximum limit on conch. Turtles and turtle eggs are also protected.

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Your Underwater Tour of the CAYMAN ISLANDS...

GRAND CAYMAN/SOUTH WALL

Next stop on the Grand Cayman underwater tour is the South Wall. When the wind is blowing too strong from the north and North Wall diving is not possible, most Grand Cayman dive operators switch to the South Wall—an equally fascinating region.

WALL DIVING: The South Wall begins deeper (65 to 70 feet) as compared to the 50 foot lip on the West and North Walls. Everything in this region appears larger—coral formations, gorgonian fans, sponges, Black Coral trees and so on. It is truly a wonderland of gigantic proportion. There are presently some 20 drop-offs along the South Wall that provide endless opportunities for diving adventure and exploration.

One of the most intriguing is **Pallas Pinnacles**, a series of three giant coral pinnacles that rise from the sand bottom. These pinnacles are 50 to 80 feet in diameter and rise vertically 100 feet or more. **Gary's Wall** is a giant coral valley that begins at 70 feet and slopes gradually to the edge of a vertical wall at 100 feet. A field of giant deep water gorgonian fans lines the west side of this valley. **Eye of the Needle** is a vertical chimney that begins at 65 feet and drops straight down to 90, where it makes a right turn into a 40 foot long tunnel that exits on the face of a vertical wall at 110 feet. There is an infinite variety of wall formations, festooned with all types of marine life. The South Wall also offers excellent shallow reef diving at many locations. Other popular wall dives in the area include **Phantom Ledge**, **No Name Wall South** and **3D**.

CAVERNS AND GROTTOS: One of the largest and most fascinating coral cave systems lies at the southwest corner of the island. It is so large it has been made into two separate dive sites: **Kent's Caves West** and **Kent's Caves East**. This system of intricate caverns and tunnels seems to go forever, with an average depth of 50 feet. There is good coral reef diving on top of the reef as well as great cave diving under the reef. The area is full of fish and divers often encounter groupers, sea turtles, Tarpon, Horse-eye Jacks and a multitude of coral reef fish.

GRAND CAYMAN/EAST END

The East End of Grand Cayman is the least developed region of this large island. It is almost an island unto itself, separated from the rest of Grand Cayman by a large expanse of rural countryside and brush lands. There are only two hotels at the East End and only two or three dive operators work this area on a regular basis.

The East End diving region includes a small portion of both the North Wall and South Wall plus a giant horseshoe shaped barrier reef that juts out from the eastern tip of the island. Along the outside edge of this barrier reef is one of Grand Cayman's most spectacular walls.

The East End is definitely for experienced divers as surface conditions are often choppy to rough and there can be a current. The East End offers the greatest abundance and variety of rare red sponges, as well as all other types of barrel, basket, vase and tube sponges. They

SDM GUIDE TO 10 GREAT DIVES OFF GRAND CAYMAN'S SEVEN MILE BEACH

Dive Site	Run Time From SMB	Site Profile	Suggested Skill Level	Min. Depth	Bottom Depth	Current	Stationary Marine Life	Marine Life Always Seen	Marine Life Sometimes Seen
BIG TUNNELS	20 min.	Vertical wall	Intermediate, experienced	50'	1,800'	0 to .5 knot	Gorgonians, barrel sponges	Groupers, angelfish, snappers	Tarpon, Silversides
BONNIE'S ARCH	20 min.	Medium depth reef	Beginner, intermediate, advanced	45'	80'	0 to 1 knot	Tube Sponges, gorgonians, hard corals	Tarpon and Horse-eye Jack schools, Gray and Queen Angelfish	Scrawled Filefish, turtles, scorpionfish, Cowfish, Trumpetfish
NORTHWEST POINT DROP-OFF	20 min.	Cascading wall	Experienced	55'	2,200'	.5 to 1.5 knots	Many gorgonian fans, Barrel and Elephant Ear sponges, Black and soft corals	Groupers, angelfish, chromis, Creole Wrasse, Durgons, Ocean Triggers	Trunkfish, Cowfish, Trumpetfish, Ocean Triggerfish, turtles, Eagle Rays, Nurse Shark
ORANGE CANYON	20 min.	Sloping wall	Beginner, intermediate, experienced	50'	1,800'	0 to 1 knot	Orange Elephant Ear Sponges, seafans, Star Corals, rope sponges	Groupers, angelfish, wrasse, chromis, Trumpetfish, jacks	Ocean Triggerfish, turtles, Tarpon, Silversides, Cowfish, big parrotfish
ORO VERDE	5 min.	Wreck	Beginner, intermediate, experienced	40'	50'	0 to .5 knot	Barrel Sponges, Flame Scallops	Yellowtail Snappers, angelfish, Bermuda Chub, groupers, Barracuda	Horse-eye Jacks, puffers, reef sharks, moray eels
RHAPSODY	15 min.	Shallow reef	Beginner, intermediate, experienced	30'	50'	0 to .5 knot	Large Tube and Barrel sponges, seafans, soft corals	Groupers, angelfish, snappers, Bermuda Chubs, grunts and Schoolmasters	School of Horse-eye Jacks, Stonefish, Yellow Stingray, Barracuda, large groupers
ROYAL PALMS LEDGE	10 min.	Shallow reef	Beginner, intermediate, experienced	35'	60'	0 to .5 knot	Hard corals, anemones, Featherduster and Christmas Trees Worms	Yellowtails, Groupers, Barracuda, Trumpetfish, Blue Tangs, Mahogany Snapper, jacks	Tarpon, Nurse Sharks, turtles, Eagle Rays, stingrays
SAND CHUTE	10 min.	Sand slope and vertical wall	Beginner, intermediate, experienced	60'	1,300'	0 to 1 knot	Cliffs of coral, Barrel Sponges	Schools of Horse-eye Jacks chromis, groupers	Turtles, stingrays, Jewfish
SOTO'S CENTRAL	10 min.	Shallow reef and caverns	Beginner, intermediate, experienced	35'	40'	0	Anemones, hard corals, shrimp	Blue Tangs, Tarpon, Yellowtails, Parrotfish, Tilefish, lobster	Southern Sennet, Barracuda, pufferfish, Silversides
TRINITY CAVES	15 min.	Vertical wall	Beginner, intermediate, experienced	45'	1,800'	.5 to 1 knot	Black Coral, gorgonian fans, barrel sponges, tube sponges, crinoids, hydroids	Chromis, Yellowtail snappers, Barracuda	Eagle Rays, groupers, Spotted Drums, Atlantic Spadefish, French and Gray Angelfish

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Cayman Brac

are absolutely magnificent.

WALL DIVING: The wall surrounding the East End is infinitely diverse in its profile. At different sites you can explore sand chutes, a maze of narrow canyons, coral pinnacles off the main wall, undercut walls and vertical chimneys. There are at least 35 different drop-off sites that are visited regularly by East End dive operators, the *Cayman Aggressor III* live-aboard or all day three tank dive trips coming from the west end of Grand Cayman.

Among the favorites is **Jack McKennedy's Wall**, where visitors are likely to encounter seven large Spotted Eagle Rays. **McCurley's Drop-off** is one of the best spots for viewing a dazzling array of red and orange sponges. **Old #12** is a great spot for the frequent appearance of Eagle Rays. Perhaps the most beautiful pinnacle dive is at **Babylon**, where a giant coral pinnacle rises from 140 feet to within 50 of the surface. The vertical pinnacle is separated from the wall by a scant 12 feet, forming a narrow Black Coral filled canyon between the two.

CAVERNS AND GROTTOS: East End also offers superb cavern and grotto diving. Many of the grottos are filled with Tarpon, Silversides and groupers. **Parrotfish Caverns** is a giant coral grotto occupied by an estimated 50 supermale Parrotfish plus some 50 to 200 Tarpon. Occasionally, visitors encounter an eight foot long 350 pound Jewfish in the same cave. **Snapper Hole** is another favorite

CAYMAN BRAC FACTS

LOCATION: 86 miles northeast of Grand Cayman, five miles east of Little Cayman
LENGTH: 12 miles
WIDTH: 2 miles
ELEVATION: 140 feet, bluff at east end
ROADS: Paved
POPULATION: 1,400
CAPITAL: Stake Bay
AIRPORT: Paved, recently extended
AIR SERVICE: Daily from Grand Cayman
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SHOPPING: Local island crafts

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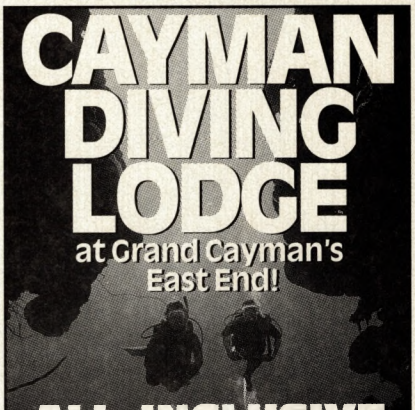

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The Meadows, Little Cayman

cave and tunnel system for seeing large Tarpon. During the late summer and fall, these caves are often filled with Silversides. **Grouper Grotto** is a shallow reef honeycombed with narrow canyons and large caverns. The region is a hangout for numerous Nassau Groupers, a school of Tarpon, a school of Horse-eye Jacks and several Eagle Rays. **Ironshore Gardens** is an extensive maze of coral caverns and tunnels that provides an endless opportunity for swim-through exploration. This cave system is loaded with reef fish of all kinds. The site is an especially good night dive as the caves are loaded with lobsters, crabs and shrimp.

REEF DIVING: Shallow reef diving is also superb, with great stands of Elkhorn Coral, towering Pillar Corals and other distinctive formations. Many of these coral formations can be found in the same areas as the cave and tunnel systems. **Ironshore Gardens** is a good example of this combination, as the entire top of the reef is covered with magnificent Antler Corals. **Fantasea Land** is a good shallow reef for seeing small Loggerhead Turtles. **Black Rock** is a great spot for viewing a large school of

photo/Walt Stearns

Captain Keith Tibbetts, *Cayman Brac*

Bermuda Chubs as well as numerous formations of tube sponges.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS: As for marine life, the East End is where you are likely to see the most unusual. There have been sightings of Whale Sharks, Manta Rays, Wahoo, Sailfish and other pelagics. Giant Tarpon can be encountered at no less than a dozen different dive sites as they seem to be all over the place. The same is true for turtles, Horse-eye Jacks and groupers.

In conclusion, one would have to say that Grand Cayman is much more than just another island in the Caribbean. This one island offers more diving diversity and sites than any other location in the Western Hemisphere. It is literally brimming with opportunities for undersea exploration—and more dive sites are being discovered and charted every year.

CAYMAN BRAC

Cayman Brac is the way Grand Cayman used to be 50 years ago but with all of the services and amenities of the 1990s. This island is one-fifth the size of Grand Cayman and supports a small population of 1,400 residents (known as Brackers). It has a modern jet airport, complete with an international terminal, good roads, a fine hospital, two hotels and an assortment of condos and guesthouses.

As for diving, Cayman Brac is almost completely surrounded by walls but is the least dived of the three Cayman Islands. There are only three dive operators on Cayman Brac and a small number of dive boats covering a wide expanse of reefs and walls.

Cayman Brac is a stringbean shaped island that runs from east to west, measuring 12 miles long and one mile wide. Because of its shape, the diving regions are divided into two parts, the North Side and the South Side. Both sides are blessed with superb drop-offs, caves and caverns and shallow coral reefs. In all, the Brac has more than 50 known dive sites, most of which are marked with moorings.

BRAC/SOUTH SIDE

Our tour of the Brac begins on the South Side. The sites here offer the easiest access (5 to 15 minute boat rides) since the dive boat pier and docks are on this side of the island.

WALL DIVING: There are at least 16 vertical drop-off sites along the South Side and more being found all the time. Most of the current sites are concentrated toward the west end of the island, near the dive resorts and boat docks.

The wall dives are quite spectacular as the visibility ranges from 100 to 150 feet. Many of the sites have intriguing names such as **Rock Monster Chimney**, **Manta Canyon**, **Sea Feather Wall** and **Tiara Tunnels**. These drop-offs offer the usual assortment of coral reef fish plus a number of impressive pelagics such as Wahoo, Spotted Eagle Rays, Mantas and Tuna.

One of the most popular sites is **Anchor Wall**, where a giant iron anchor is wedged in a narrow canyon that leads to the vertical face of the wall. The anchor appears to be nine feet tall and seven feet across at the flukes. It is suspended in the center of the crevice, as the flukes are literally fused to the sides of the crevice.

REEF DIVING: Shallow coral reef diving is equally good on the South Side with some of the most popular locations being **Elkhorn Reef**, **Sergeant Major**, **Butterfly** and **Angel Reef**. Most are named after the dominant coral species or resident fish life. For example, at **Tarpon Reef** you will definitely find a school of giant Tarpon that love to hang in the shallows or in one of the many coral channels.

BRAC/NORTH SIDE

For more diving adventures, a trip to the North Side is in order. This side of the island is even more popular because of the high quality and diversity of experiences, including wreck diving.

WALL DIVING: The North Side offers spectacular wall diving with visibility that ranges from 100 to 200 feet. One of its most notable features is an abundance of brilliant, canary yellow tube sponges that are found at depths of 60 feet or deeper. Some of the best sites include **Cemetery Wall**, **Garden Eel Wall** and **Strawberry Sponge Wall**. There is a wide assortment of marine life to be seen along the North Side, including an abundance of Tiger Groupers, an occasional

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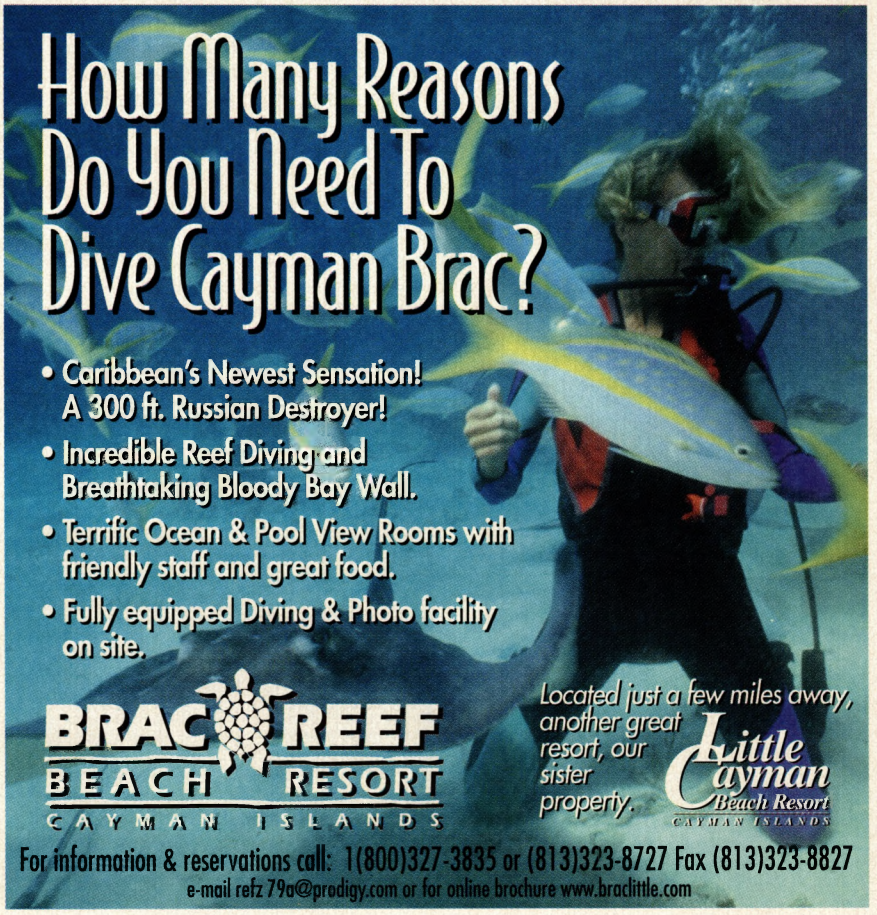
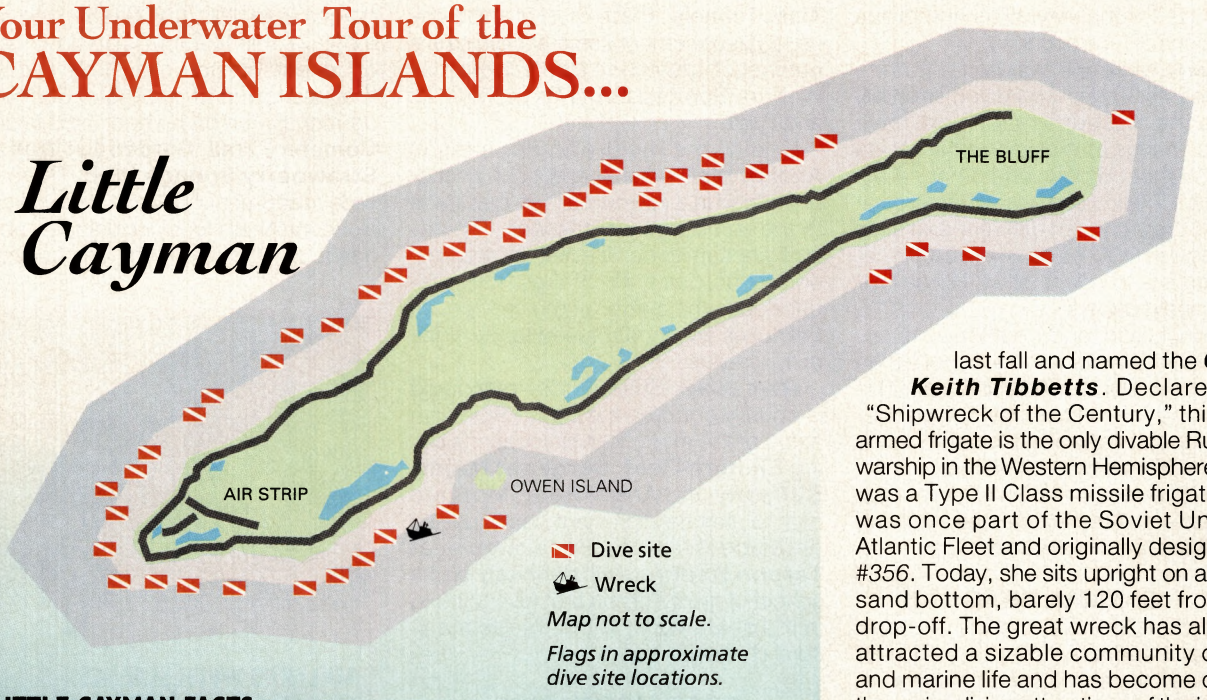


Your Underwater Tour of the CAYMAN ISLANDS...

Little Cayman



LITTLE CAYMAN FACTS

LOCATION: 79 miles northeast of Grand Cayman, five miles west of Cayman Brac
LENGTH: 10 miles
WIDTH: 1 mile
ELEVATION: 60 feet/flat limestone island
ROADS: Graded coral, some paved
POPULATION: 110 permanent residents
CAPITAL: Blossom Village
AIRPORT: 3,300 feet, grass, no control tower
AIR SERVICE: Daily service/Island Air
LODGING: Five hotel/guest lodges
SHOPPING: Limited

Jewfish, numerous scorpionfish, Spotted Eagle Rays and schools of Horse-eye Jacks.

REEF DIVING: Some of the best coral reef diving on Cayman Brac can be found along the North Side. Reefs such as **Patch Reef** and **Grunt Valley** are loaded with schools of fish, as well as thousands of macro creatures. Diving depths on the shallow reefs range from 20 to 50 feet. At **Buccaneer Reef** you are likely to find several Flying Gurnards grazing in the sand flats at 50 feet.

WRECK DIVING: The special attraction of the North Side is the variety of wreck diving found there. For example, the wreck of the ***Cayman Mariner*** sits on a flat sand bottom at the mouth of **East Chute**. This is a great place to encounter moray eels and a Jewfish is often seen here.

Kissime is a shallow water reef site where you can find a small 60 foot steel tugboat lying on its port side. It has rolled over almost on its stack. The site is named for the wreck. The diving depth is only 40 feet.

The Brac's newest and by far most impressive shipwreck is a completely intact 330 foot long Russian warship sunk last fall and named the ***Capt. Keith Tibbetts***. Declared the "Shipwreck of the Century," this fully armed frigate is the only divable Russian warship in the Western Hemisphere. She was a Type II Class missile frigate that was once part of the Soviet Union's Atlantic Fleet and originally designated *#356*. Today, she sits upright on a white sand bottom, barely 120 feet from the drop-off. The great wreck has already attracted a sizable community of fish and marine life and has become one of the major diving attractions of the island.

LITTLE CAYMAN

Little Cayman is the untamed wilderness of the Cayman Islands. The island's population is comprised of 116 residents. There are five very small resorts that cater to divers, fishermen and nature lovers. There are very few roads, a small grass airstrip and one tiny village called Orange Blossom. Air service to Little Cayman is available through Island Air, an inter-island airline that operates scheduled and charter flights to Little Cayman from Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac. It operates a fleet of small, 5 to 19 passenger propeller aircraft.

The island is virtually unknown to the commercial tourist industry, yet among divers Little Cayman is legendary for its superb diving. There are no less than six dive operators on the island, plus weekly visits by two live-aboards (*Cayman Aggressor III* and *Little Cayman Diver II*) and day boats coming over from Cayman Brac.

LITTLE CAYMAN/NORTH SIDE

Our underwater tour of Little Cayman begins on the North Side. It is by far the most popular region for visiting divers as this is where the drop-off comes closest to the shoreline. The North Side can be divided into two basic zones—Bloody

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Bay Wall and Jackson Wall. It is fairly easy to identify these zones as each is marked by a neat row of boat moorings spaced 30 to 50 yards apart.

WALL DIVING: Bloody Bay Wall is perhaps the single most famous drop-off in the Cayman Islands. It has attained worldwide fame as the only vertical wall in the entire Caribbean that begins at the incredibly shallow depth of 20 feet. Yes, you heard it right, the lip of the wall starts at 20 feet and drops straight down to 1,000 feet or more. It is a sheer cliff of awesome proportions. Add to this phenomenon super clear visibility that ranges from 100 to 200 feet and you can see how Bloody Bay Wall has earned its reputation as the "best wall dive in the Caribbean."

The wall itself is comprised of at least a dozen individual dive sites, each a little bit different than the next. At **Mixing Bowl** you will find a veritable fish bowl of marine activity with dozens of different species all mixing together. It is also a great spot to photograph blood Red Vase Sponges. **Marilyn's Cut** features a vertical crevice plus a sheer wall festooned with bright yellow sponges. **Randy's Gazebo** features a coral archway. Nearby are two more sites called **Great Wall East** and **Great Wall West**—sheer vertical drop-offs that are actually undercut. Other sites along Bloody Bay include **Lea's Lookout**, **Coconut Wall** and **Barracuda Bight**. In addition to the vertical wall itself, the top of the reef is tightly packed with hard corals, gorgonians, sponges and fans.

Jackson Wall is a bit farther east of Bloody Bay and the wall itself is farther offshore. Again, there are at least 12 different dive sites in this zone and they are considerably different from each other. At **Nancy's Cup of Tea**, a large coral pinnacle, rises vertically just off the main drop-off. **Jackson's Wall** has marvelous tunnels and caves along its face. **Blacktip Boulevard** is loaded with giant basket sponges. **Eagle Ray Roundup** is comprised of a large sandy flat separated from the drop-off by a coral ridge. Several long crevices and tunnels lead from the sand to the vertical face of the drop-off.

CAVES AND GROTTOS: Jackson Wall is also an excellent area for caves and grottos. These tunnel systems are found under many of the shallow to medium depth reefs. They are often occupied by large groupers and jacks that feed on schools of Silversides. Some of the best grottos can be found at such sites as **The Meadows**, **Cumber's Caves** and Eagle Ray Roundup. In addition to Silversides, these sites are excellent for sighting Spotted Eagle Rays, sea turtles, large parrotfish, stingrays and French Angelfish.

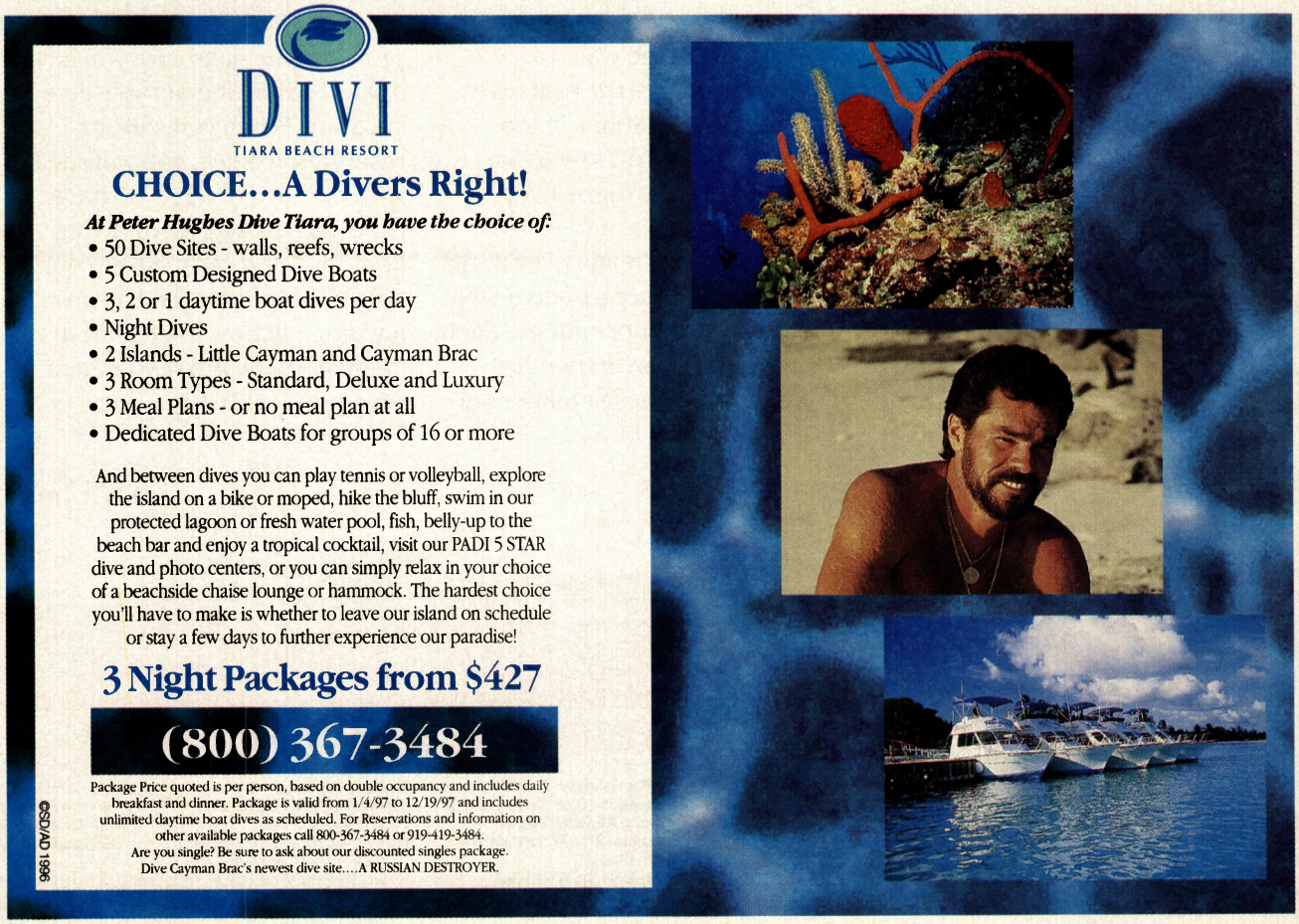
LITTLE CAYMAN/SOUTH WALL

When the wind blows out of the north and it is too rough to dive the North Side, Little Cayman's dive operators switch to the South Side. This is fairly easy to do since many of the resorts and most of the dive boats are kept at South Hole Sound.

WALL DIVING: The sites on the South Side begin deeper, at 50 to 60 feet, and are not as well known. The quality of diving is just as good but these fine sites have been overshadowed by the legendary Bloody Bay Wall. Most of the sites are at the western end of the island, which is conveniently accessible from nearby South Hole Sound. The most popular sites in this area include **Patty's Place**, **Pirate's Point Reef**, **Charlie's Chimney** and **Black Hole**.

WRECK DIVING: Little Cayman has one shipwreck known as the ***Soto Trader***, a 120 foot long steel hulled freighter that sank in 1975. She now sits upright on the bottom in 50 feet of water, still fully intact with her stern up against the coral reef. There are many points of interest on this wreck, including the remnants of two Jeeps in the forward and middle cargo holds.

In conclusion, one can say that Little Cayman is a nature lover's paradise, where the diving is easy and the island atmosphere extremely relaxing.



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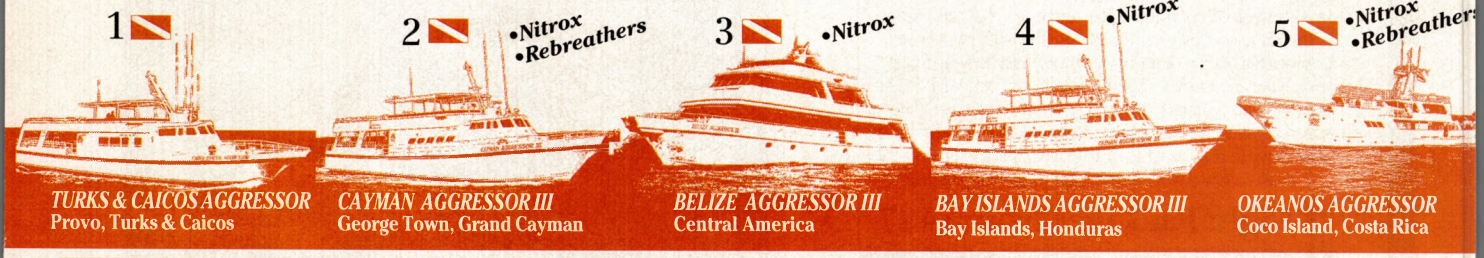

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Truk - Stan Waterman and Jim Church

MAY 1997
Kona – Stan Waterman
Truk - Stan Waterman and Jim Church

JUNE 1997
Okeanos - Dive the World Club "Bring a Friend" Week
Turks & Caicos - Nikon Team Cruise

JULY 1997
Cayman Islands - Stan Waterman
Galapagos - Dive the World Club "Bring a Friend" Week
Okeanos- Stan Waterman and Jim Church
Truk - Dive the World Club "Bring a Friend" Week

AUGUST 1997
Belize - Clay Wiseman
Cayman Islands - Jim Church Nikon Team Cruise
Fiji - Project Ocean Search with Jean-Michel Cousteau
Kona - Dive the World Club "Bring a Friend" Week

SEPTEMBER 1997
Belize - Dive the World Clu "Bring a Friend Week"
Palau - Dive the World Clu "Bring a Friend Week"

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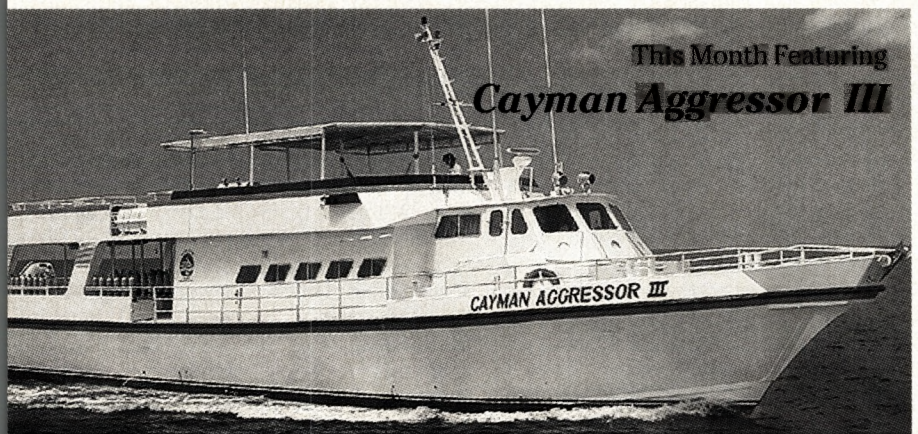

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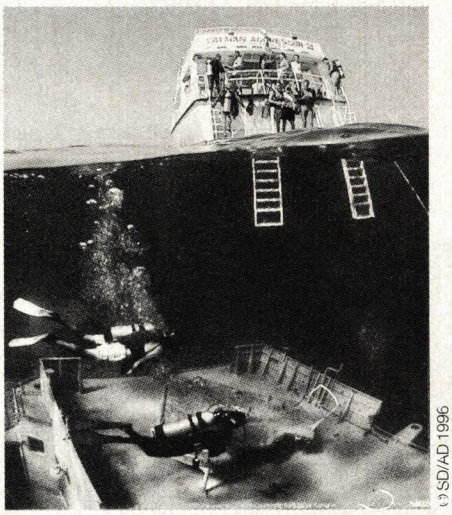

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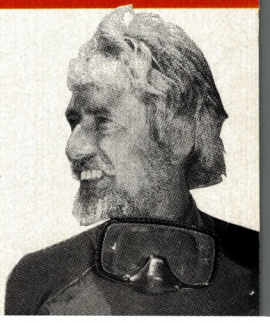

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A Rhapsody of Dive Adventure Awaits Those Lucky Enough to Catch Sea Fever

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY STEPHEN FRINK

The question most commonly asked of dive journalists is "Where is your favorite place to dive?" The question encompasses the whole world of exotic diving and is generally too broad to answer. So, the second most commonly asked question seems to be "Where is your favorite place to dive in the Caribbean?" For me the answer is one that involves a couple of disclaimers. First, one of my favorite destinations is not in the Caribbean Sea at all but in the southern Atlantic Ocean. And second, it is not a single island but a collection of 700 islands. However, considered in its entirety, I'd have to say The Islands of Bahamas offer the best dive adventure in this hemisphere.

At this point the questioner will inevitably ask "Yeah, but where in The Bahamas?" That is a more difficult question, for I've had great diving throughout The Bahamas. In the Northern Bahamas, off the West End of Grand Bahama, I've snorkeled with a large pod of Spotted Dolphins along a shallow bank known as **White Sand Ridge**, dived dramatic walls decorated with Black Coral and colorful sponges and had terrific night dives at the shallow **Sugar Wreck**. At Cay Sal Bank, I've dived unique oceanic blue holes, fed Sharpnose Sharks and photographed incredibly vibrant and colorful filter feeders along the vertical wall. In the Western Bahamas, in the area from Bimini to Orange Cay, I've snorkeled with Spotted Dolphins at **Eldorado Shoal**, photographed Caribbean Reef Sharks at **Shark Reef** and dived with the huge schools of fish that now occupy the ***Bimini Trader*** and the **Bimini Barge**. In the Berry Islands and off North Andros, I've explored the ***Lady Moore***, swimming amid myriad Silversides and schooling grunts. The shallow Elkhorn forests off the **Jolter Cays** and **Holmes Reef** provide stunning snorkeling opportunities and, for good reason, **Chub Cay** is known as "the Fishbowl of The Bahamas." And, in the Southern Bahamas, I've been thrilled by true 200 foot water clarity off San Salvador, dived the incredible walls and historical shipwrecks of Conception Island and photographed the tame groupers and abundant reef fish of **Rum Cay**. I've visited all of these amazing dive sites, and many more, aboard the live-aboard *Sea Fever*.

As you might imagine, the dives mentioned did not happen in a single week, on a single cruise but over nearly two decades of diving with my friend, Captain Tom Guarino. Tom began offering diving services in The Bahamas in 1974, with a day boat operation visiting the reefs and wrecks off Bimini. In 1978, Tom became involved in the early era of dive live-aboards with a 40 foot boat christened *Sea Fever*. By 1983, Tom was the first dive entrepreneur to realize the potential the crew boats designed to work the oil fields in the Gulf of Mexico might have as a dive live-aboard. He converted a 90 foot aluminum crew boat and gave it the same

In watching the graceful ease of Spotted Dolphins in the water, one can sense what a perfect melody must look like to the soul.

name as his first live-aboard. The new *Sea Fever* was bigger, faster and, in all ways, better. Its extended range and cruising comfort gave Captain Tom the means to explore, discover and offer his clients the very best diving in The Bahamas, no matter where it might be found.

With six distinct itineraries, it is hard to decide which *Sea Fever* adventure to join.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Sea Fever cruises are best known for:

- Intriguing wrecks
- Spotted Dolphins
- Thrilling shark dives
- Whimsical shallow reefs
- Outstanding macro

Each *Sea Fever* itinerary is constantly evolving as Captain Tom and crew explore new areas. For example, the Exumas/Eleuthera tour is quite a bit different than when I took the trip in 1995. It still departs Nassau but now includes the northern Exumas all the way to the southwest tip of Eleuthera. Some of the highlights include wall dives along Eleuthera, such as the fantastically photogenic **Whips and Chains**. This whimsical name alludes to an old anchor chain that loops down the wall to 180 feet and then terminates in an anchor embedded in a ledge at just 70 feet. The chain drips with Black Coral, large sponges and sea-whips, while the anchor provides a terrific wide angle set-up.

Just to shoreward is the shallow **Fluke Reef**, one of several outstanding macro and night dives on this itinerary.

For pelagic enthusiasts, the pinnacle known as **Marlin Mountain** has delivered Sailfish and Marlin sightings on rare occasions. Rich populations of reef dwellers such as Tiger Groupers, however, are a sure thing.

Off Highbourne Cay is a new wreck, the ***Austin Smith***. It was named for one of three Bahamian crewmen killed when a Cuban MIG fired on a Bahamian Defense Force vessel in the process of arresting Cuban lobster poachers off Ragged Island. The *Austin Smith* was once a Cape Class U.S. Coast Guard cutter. This 95 footer worked as a Royal Bahamas Defense Force vessel for years before being decommissioned and sunk as an artificial reef in 60 feet of water. In the year she has been down, this perfectly upright vessel has attracted lots of resident fish and is a great wreck dive.

Little San Salvador island is a perfect blend of topside beauty and underwater delight. Along the West Bay is a gorgeous anchorage with turquoise water lapping a broad white sand beach ideal for those seeking to renew their land legs. Offshore is a series of giant pinnacles draped in deep water gorgonians and Black Coral, as well as a wall site known as **Matterhorn**, where massive pink tube sponges decorate the wall from 60 to 100 feet.

Still, one of the most exciting dives of the Exumas/Eleuthera itinerary is the appropriately named Danger Cay, where a wonderful Caribbean Reef Shark encounter has evolved. **Dangerous Reef** is the site and the stars of the show are one-half dozen Caribbean Reef Sharks that are in no way shy about posing for pictures, a particularly brazen Nurse

(Continued on Page 140)

SEA FEVER ITINERARIES

Tour Area	Time of Year	Departs	Highlights
Northern Bahamas	May-October	Freeport, Grand Bahama	Spotted Dolphins, Sugar Wreck, pristine reefs and walls.
Cay Sal Bank	May-October	Miami Beach, Florida	Seven different oceanic blue holes, Fire Demon Cave, Snapper Reef, Shark Hole, amazing wall dives.
Western Bahamas/ Bimini to Orange Cay	Year-round	Miami Beach, Florida	Eldorado Shoal, Bimini to Spotted Dolphin encounter, *Bimini Trader*, *Bimini Barge*, Tuna Alley, Shark Reef.
Berry Islands/ North Andros	Year-round	Miami Beach, Florida	*Lady Moore* wreck, snorkeling at Jolter Cays and Holmes Reef, Chub Cay, rich marine life at Northwest Channel Reef.
Exumas/Eleuthera	Spring/ fall	Nassau, Bahamas	Little San Salvador, Black Coral walls, shark dive at Danger Cay, drift dive through Wax Cut, Whips and Chains wall dive, Cat Island.
Southern Bahamas	Spring/ fall	Nassau, Bahamas	Cat Island and Tartar Bank, San Salvador, Rum Cay, Conception Island, Crooked Island and Plana Cays.

(Note: The *Sea Fever* is based in Miami Beach, just a short taxi ride from the Miami International Airport. Some itineraries depart Miami Beach; others depart Freeport, Grand Bahama or Nassau, New Providence. Frequent and inexpensive airfare is available from each of these popular Bahamas gateway cities.)

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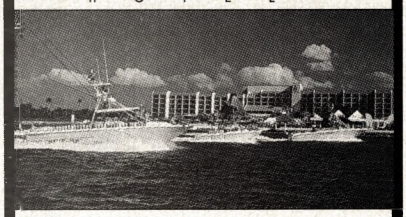

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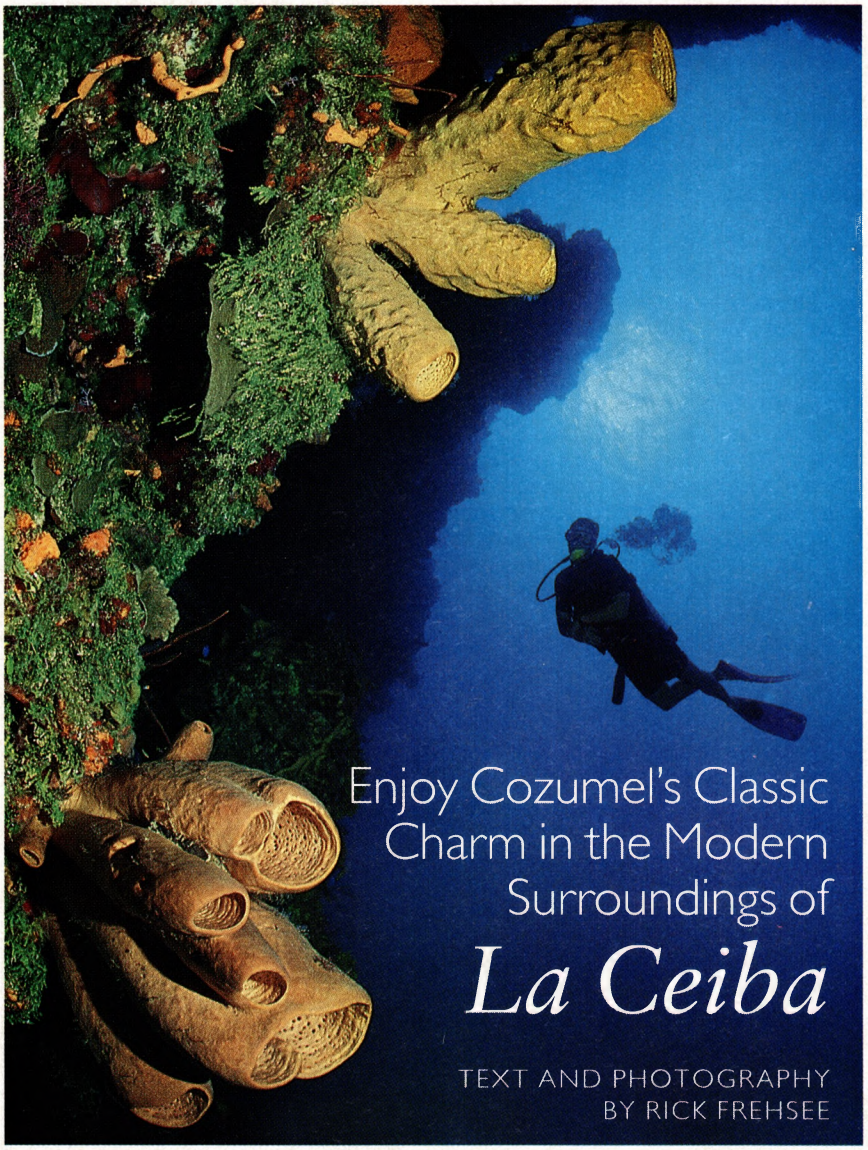

Enjoy Cozumel's Classic Charm in the Modern Surroundings of *La Ceiba*

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK FREHSEE

Top: Colombia Deep. Above: La Ceiba's high rise towers over a spacious deck and pool.

Warm sun, crystal water, a coastline that alternates ironshore with beautiful beaches and a little Mexican town that will steal your heart away—Cozumel is a special vacation experience.

The largest of Mexico's Caribbean islands, Cozumel is also a valid world-class diving destination. Positioned to benefit from the nearly constant flow of the Yucatan current, its underwater visibility is seldom less than 100 feet and often approaches 200. The current also provides a constant source of primary and secondary productivity; plankton flow nourishes and nudges reef growth, creating monster coral formations. Huge towers and mountains of coral dwarf the relatively tiny divers drifting by. Another effect of the current is its shaping of normally symmetrical sponges and seafans into wild, fantasy formations. A generous variety of invertebrates, reef tropicals, schooling fish and pelagics from the blue abyss gather over the rainbow reefs.

The current also modifies diving techniques. Once you get used to drifting with the current, you can appreciate the effortless ride. While Cozumel's reefs aren't exactly deserted, no one has to wait for a popular site to become available. There are no moorings; a small group can enter a dive site when they please.

The flip side of Cozumel is just as exciting. Nondiving hours are easily spent sunning at pools or beaches, shopping or lounging in town, or exploring mainland Yucatan sites. With such a wide variety of tempting things to do, it's hard to believe this paradise is less then two hours flying time from the continental U.S.

La Ceiba Beach and Dive Resort is another reason for embracing Cozumel. Here is one of the most popular hotels on the island—a handsome beach resort that blends location, practicality and charm into an impressive package. Small enough to be personal and large enough for excellent services and amenities, La Ceiba is an excellent choice for a Cozumel retreat.

La Ceiba is in the heart of the southern hotel zone, three minutes south of town via local taxi and ten minutes via van ride from the Cozumel International Airport. The entire property is on the beachside of the coastal road. The resort includes a lobby area that divides guestrooms into a low rise three story wing (north) and high rise 12 story tower (south); two restaurants (one indoor with a patio overlooking the pool and garden, one outdoor on a terrace overlooking the sea); two lounges (one indoor, one out); two wide sprawling beaches and two swimming pools; tennis courts; a hottub; a complete gym and sauna; and a full service dive center complete with shore entry platforms. Adjacent to the low rise wing is a 150 person convention room. In the reception area is a travel center and, on the entrance side of the hotel, there is a strip mall that includes a store, a boutique, car and scooter rental and Cozumel's most complete photo/video center.

There are 113 guestrooms (42 in the low wing, 71 in the tower). All have an ocean/garden view; each wing has a separate beach and pool. All rooms are air-conditioned and have cable TV, full bath, refrigerator and balcony.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

La Ceiba is best known for:

- Great shore diving
- Short trips to Palancar
- Great U/W visibility
- Wide variety of topside activities

The two restaurants at La Ceiba work in tandem. El Galeon—indoor just south of the lobby—provides a full breakfast menu. La Chopa Loca, on the shoreline between the two beaches and pools, serves lunch and dinner. The menu features popular continental cuisine and tasty Mexican specialties. The entire staff at La Ceiba is

(Continued on Page 119)

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with a choice of liveaboards in the exotic waters of Papua New Guinea. Every dive is an exciting new experience, highlighted by encounters with dog tooth tuna, sharks, vast schools of pelagics such as barracuda, trevally and others, an occasional billfish, dolphin or even whale, as well as an abundance of colorful invertebrates and soft corals. The recently renovated M.V. FeBrina accesses the pristine Kimbe Bay area of Northern New Britain and its offshore islands and reefs. Starting in February of '97, the Star Dancer tours Northern New Britain accessing Witu Islands to the northwest and Fathers Reef to the northeast with special itineraries from Kimbe Bay to Rabaul visiting sites around Watom Island and Duke of York Islands.

Spacious Cabins

Why Book a Peter Hughes Liveaboard?

- **Peter Hughes Diving sets the standard in Liveaboard Luxury** - with first class features like spacious air-conditioned cabins with ensuite facilities, morning coffee service, and sit down dining with full course meals, a Peter Hughes Liveaboard offers an incomparable luxury dive experience. You'll appreciate thoughtful extras such as warm towels and freshly baked treats after your dive, complimentary robes and toiletries, fresh linens and nightly turn-down service.
- **Convenience** - onboard amenities such as fully stocked boatiques, dive deck services, rigid deco bars, and daily E-6 processing and video services are just a few examples of Peter's quest to deliver the ultimate dive adventure.
- **Value** - With a top notch dive crew to guide you, you'll get more dive for your dollars with a Peter Hughes liveaboard experience.
- **Peter's Reputation** - Peter Hughes is well known throughout the dive community for his commitment to offering the highest standard of dive excellence.
- **Divers consistently rate the Dancer liveaboards among the world's best!**

RED SEA

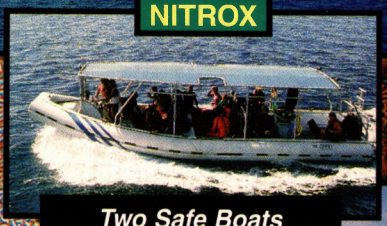
Moon Dancer on the Red Sea

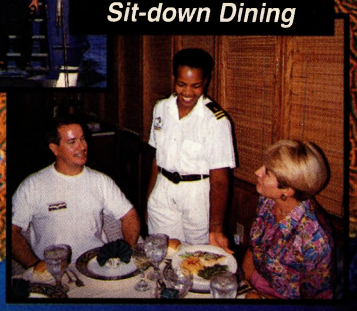
Experience the Egyptian Red Sea, famed for its diverse marine life and spectacular visibility. Exotic adventures await as you explore fascinating above and below the water sites from this new Peter Hughes luxury liveaboard. Dive from Hurghada to Sharm el Sheik on the Sinai to the north or south to Al Ikhwan and beyond. During 5 months of summer, explore the deep south from the Port of El Qu'Sir to remote sites like Fury and Sarnaca.

PALAU

Sun Dancer II - Ultra Luxury Liveaboard

Get ready to dive a region known as one of the seven underwater wonders of the world on the most luxurious liveaboard dive vessel ever. Dive the walls of the barrier reef as two jet driven safe boats swiftly transport you to famed sites like Blue Corner, Blue Holes, Ngemelis Drop Off, Saies Tunnel and Ulong Channel. Extended tours from as far north as Velasco Reef and Kayangel all the way south to Anguar are part of the Sun Dancer II itineraries. A few special extended itineraries to the Southwest Island of Palau are scheduled throughout the year.





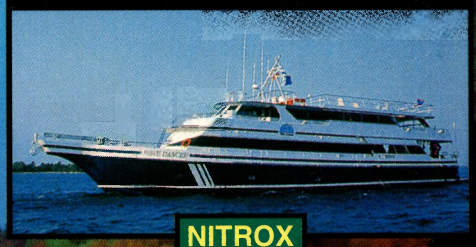
Photography Credits: Stephen Frink

BELIZE

Wave Dancer

Dive offshore atolls beyond the world's second largest barrier reef, including the famed Lighthouse Reef, where you'll discover the Blue Hole and the magnificent nature preserve at Half Moon Cay. You'll see everything from macro critters along the walls, to eagle rays, manta rays, turtles, tarpon and a resident dolphin named Honey.

Wave Dancer - Belize



NITROX

BAY ISLANDS

Wind Dancer

Discover excitement below as you dive an extensive itinerary off the north coast of Honduras. Experience greatly diversified wall diving at each of the Bay Islands where walls start at only 15, 20 or 45 feet. Witness abundant stony corals, colorful sponges, schooling fish, dolphins and even the occasional whale shark. Dive spectacular sites like Roatan, Guanaja, Sea Mounts and Utila and see the littlest of the little in the macro dive destination of the Cayos Cochinos Islands.

Wind Dancer - Bay Islands

TURKS & CAICOS

Sea Dancer

Dive the uninhabited island of West Caicos and the more popular of the Turks and Caicos Islands, Providenciales' northwestern wall. Great wall diving with spectacular drop-offs, and cruising eagle rays, sharks and other pelagics, maybe even encounter the great humpback whales on their annual winter migration through the Turks Island Passage or the Caicos Island Passage.

Sea Dancer - Turks & Caicos

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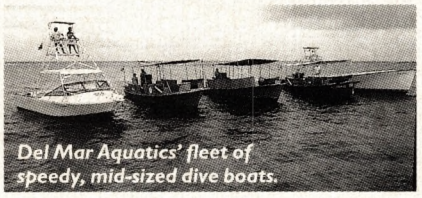
LA CEIBA BEACH AND DIVE RESORT

(Continued from Page 118)

helpful and friendly. Incidentally, all service personnel speak English and the water supply throughout the hotel is potable.

Gin clear water, usually calm, laps the shoreline behind La Ceiba. This is one of the best shore diving areas off Cozumel—a series of striated patch reefs and the scattered remnants of a twin engine airplane wreck. La Ceiba's location makes it a relatively short distance to Cozumel's most popular dive sites. These include the mountainous formations at **Palancar Reef**, the continuous row of colorful coral heads at **Santa Rosa** and the canyons and caverns of **Punta Sur**.



Del Mar Aquatics' fleet of speedy, mid-sized dive boats.

At the northern end of the beach is Del Mar Aquatics, La Ceiba's dedicated dive operation. The dive boats, a fleet of speedy mid-sized boats, pull up to the dock just steps from the dive center. They are among the faster boats on the island and are practical and comfortable. The usual boat outing included in packages is a two tank morning dive. Evening and night dives are a la carte.

Mexicana Airlines, the national carrier, provides the most popular daily service to Cozumel from several U.S. gateway cities.

Especially convenient for photographers is Island Photo and Video Center, just outside La Ceiba's main entrance. This handsome store, owned and operated by two personable professionals, Armando and Holly Alentado, offers a full service photo lab, U/W cameras and video system rentals, instruction, custom video shoots, emergency camera repair, a photo gallery and film, battery and accessory sales.

On the island there are several small Maya ruins and some spectacular coastal scenery. Chichen Itza, Tulum and Coba are three popular Maya sites that can be visited on the Yucatan mainland, only a few hours away.

La Ceiba Beach and Dive Resort is a favorite dive retreat that combines comfort, ambiance and convenience on the captivating island of Cozumel. For more information, contact La Ceiba Beach Hotel in Dallas, Texas, at (800) 877-4383.

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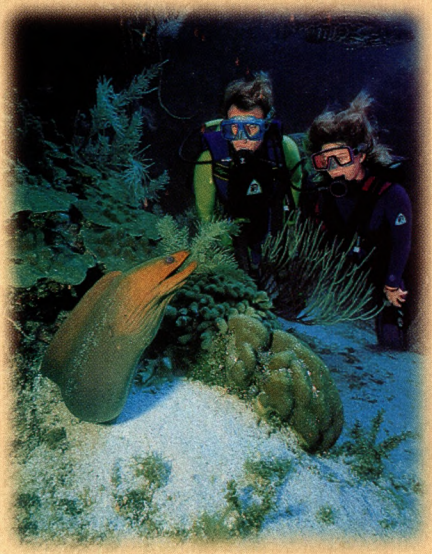

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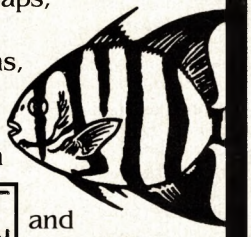

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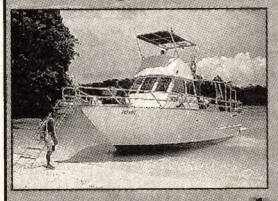

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SSI Platinum Pro 5000 Award

IT TAKES A TRUE COMMITMENT TO DIVING

BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

Platinum Pros include (clockwise from above): Bahamas photo pro Pam Christman, environmentalist Jean-Michel Cousteau, Aggressor Fleet's Wayne Hasson and East Coast dive boat captain Steve Bielenda.

Although it's diving's most prestigious award, you don't have to be famous or the president of anything to become an SSI Platinum Pro. You do, however have to have a true commitment to and a passion for diving, one that drives you to make 5,000 dives or 2,500 dives and a significant contribution to the sport.

The Platinum Pro 5000 Award was created five years ago by Bob Clark, founder of Scuba Schools International (SSI). Although some of the Pros are well known, many are not. Their ranks include people involved in all aspects of the sport, from instructors, boat captains, divemasters, U/W photographers and writers to equipment manufacturers, travel agents and magazine staff members.

Each year, when the new Platinum Pros are introduced at a special party during the DEMA Show, there's a slide presentation and the images of both old and new Pros flash across the screen. Some of the photos submitted for this year's show appear here. And, the following list includes the names of both brand new and previous Platinum Pro recipients.

If you have the passion and the commitment but not the necessary 2,500 or 5,000 dives, you might be interested in the awards SSI offers for 100, 500 and 1,000 dives. These could be your stepping stones to the Platinum Pro 5000. For more information, call Scuba Schools International at (970) 482-0883.

SSI Platinum Pro 5000 Recipients

*Denotes a 1997 recipient

ANGUILLA
Grummitt, Iain I.
Peabody, Thomas L. C.

ANTIGUA
Birk, John
Gilkes, Martha Watkins
Kirchner, Bert

ARUBA
Molina, Martin G.

AUSTRALIA
Allen, Gerald R.
Andrewartha, Barry
Ball, Mike
Biles, John
Bugg, Stan
Byron, Tom
Coleman, Neville
Cowie, R. Don
Cropp, Ben
Cummins, Nancy
Davidson, Peter
Deacon, Kevin
Deas, Jane Agnes
Deas, Walter
De Groot, Russell
Feldman, Philip
Filippetti, Carlo
Fontes, Tony W.
Fox, Rodney
Griffiths, John
Henderson, Phil
Hitchins, Noel
Ihnen, Francis
Inglis, Wayne Ronald
Isbel, Ron
Jameson, Bruce
Jarrett, Alan
Kelly, Iain
Keough, Tom
Krassoff, David
Lippman, John
Lipson, Reg
McCallum, Graham Murray
McKenzie, Col
McKinnon, Ian
Medcraft, Tony
Murray, Tui
Riddell, Greg
Rosman, Paul
Steene, Roger
Taylor, Chris
Taylor, Ron
Taylor, Valerie
Washington, Patrick
Welmink, Harry
Whitaker, Richard
Windsor, David
Ziebell, Alby

AUSTRIA
Assl, Wolfgang
Bretterklieber, Ernst
Dworak, Johann
Heusler, Eddi
Jungbauer, Georg
Kainz, Philipp
Luttenberger, Franz
Medlitsch, Ing. Franz
Orac, Norbert
Reschl, Hans
Riedl, Rupert
Roethy, Ing. Gerhard
Sembenotti, Albert
Stueber, Ederhard
Velimirov, Branko

BAHAMAS
Adkison, Gary J.
Albury, Barry
Bethel, Kevin
Birch, Peter G. Douglas
Brassil, Maura
*Christman, Pamela I.
Christman, Paul
Cove, Michelle K.
Cove, Stuart
Englander, John
Ferguson, Ollie B.
Fox, Jef
Friese, Joerg
Gilbert, Dowrn D.
Keefe, Bill
Keefe, Nowdla
Kirz, Cheryl
Kruger, Gene T.
Kuska, Peter K. F.
LaChance, Skeet
Lowe, Leroy
McKinney, Gavin
Mockler, Paul
Nivens, Frazier
Pecel, Brad
Rogers, Keith
Rose, Benjamin J.
Smith, Dalbert
Stafford, Mike T.
Stevens, Brendal James
Tozer, Colin J.
Whiteland, Arthur W.
Wight, Jeffrey R.

BARBADOS
Degia, Haroon
Noel, Julian
Seale, Michael A.
Young, Michael A.

BELIZE
Bennett, Dave
Bowers, Raymond V.
Bounting, Frank
Erhard, Bobby
Forman, Allan
Forman, Sylvin
Parkey, Hugh
Paz, Albino
*Seruntine, Donald P.
Vasquez, Turiano

BERMUDA
Tucker, Teddy

BONAIRE
Bowker, Bruce
Catalfumo, Al
Chalk, Jack
Clemencia, Alvin
Domacasse, Ebo
Domacasse, Johan
Jansen, Jeremy L.
Margarita, Maximo
Martijn, Leonel
Nahr, Andre E.
Scarr, Dee
Schnabel, Gerald C.
Statia, Eddy
Stewart, Don
Swygert, Susan L.
Teitel, Pamela A.
Thode, Arnold

BRAZIL
Bugowicz, Alecsi
Colassanti, Arduino
Fonseca, Randal
Fritzsche, Leonora
Nieto, Cesar Corazza

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS
Baskin, Alan M.
Baskin, Eva Cope
Hartman, Robert A.
Jardine, Alan
Jardine, Clare
Kilbride, Bert
Kilbride, Gary T.
Mitchell, Lisa Ann
Muirhead, Duncan
Thompson, Susan
Van Blaricum, Michael R.

CANADA
Teather, Robert G.

CAYMAN ISLANDS
Acuff, Shelly

Bennett, Steven F.
Briggs, Adrien B.
Buckley, John
Burke, Cornell L.
Carter, Bob
Church, Cathy
*Davis, Brian W.
Ebanks, Darvin
Evans, Arthle L.
Foster, Robert Don
Freeman, Roger S.
Hasson, Anne
Hasson, Wayne R.
Huck, Mark
Jetmore, Danny T.
Jordan, Julie
Kingstad, Jeff
Kipp, Kathleen
Kipp, Ronald L.
Lexau, Christine
McClain, Leslie
McCoy, Chris
McDermot, Winston
McDowall, Rod
McNeal, Reid E.
Merren, Gregory
Milburn, Peter J.P.
Morrison, Dan
Spencer, Bill
Steere, Sue
Sutton, Laurie
Sutton, Martin J.
Uditis, J. Edward
Williams, Raymond Keith

COOK ISLANDS, SOUTH PACIFIC
*Wilson, Greg

COSTA RICA
Beard, Nadine K.
Beard, William V.
Klapfer, Avi
Naaman, Yosy
Ordan, Orly
Vargas, Mario

CURACAO
Kleine, Alex
Richards, Chris J.
Sybesma, Jeff
Wederfoort, Eric Berhard

DOMINICA
Perryman, Derek I.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
*Schecker, Felipe

EGYPT
Antoine, Claude
*Elana, Tamer
El Gohary, Mohsen
Gohar, Hamad
Gabr Aly, Hesham
Johnson, Bob
*Maiorca, Enzo
Riepel, Ingo
Schmidt, Rolf
*Shafshak, Ashraf
*Zocca, Roberto

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA
Acker, Bill
Aisek, Kimiuo
Faimaw, Jesse
Graham, Chineina K.
Graham, Clark
Higgs, E. Lance
Rudolph, Arimichy
Rudolph, Michioshy

FIJI ISLANDS
Anthony, John
Bati, Api
Beckmann, Denis E.
Cammick, Ric
Douglas, Noel
Evans, Dave
Evans, Lorraine
Holme, Mike
Lawlor, Greg
Nand, Yogesh
Prasad, Deo
Tamanivalu, A. Valu
Valentine, Tyrone P.
Wakeham, Charles

FRANCE
Cousteau, Jean-Michel
Cousteau, Jacques-Yves

FRENCH POLYNESIA (BORA BORA)
Sibani, Claude

GERMANY
Altkorn, Benjamin
Amsler, Kurt
Arevalo, Sebastian F.
Baier, Kurt
Bauer, Heinz
Benda, Hilmar
Binanzer, Gerhard
Binanzer, Waltraut
Blattmann, Gerd
Bohn, Hans-Joerg
Brandt, Ronald
Charne´, Detlef
Dilger, Max
Dillier, Urs
Ehm, O.F.
Eibl-Eibesfeld, (Irenaus)
Engstler, Tyrid
Ferrantino, Claudio
Ferriol, Jaime
Freidling, Arthur
Fuchs, Dietmar
Galster, Rene
Garofalo, Gianni
Gruetzedick, Maike
Grundmann, Bernd
Guggenbuhl, Walti
Hagemann, Dieter
Hagemann, Thomas
Hahn, Max
Hass, Hans
Hass, Lotte
Haux, Gerhard
Heese, Edgar
Holzapfel, Rudolf
Humberg, Bernd
Karmel, Leonardo
Keller, Jorg
Kneip, Rudi
Klein, Leo
Kromp, Thomas
Krose, George
Krueger, Manfred
Lavanchy, Jacky W.
Luechtenberg, Dietmar
Mueller, Dieter
Munzinger, Paul
Naglschmid, F. (Fredrick)
Neumann, Guenter
Pastorino, Juergen
Plate, Herbert
Prinz, Bernhard
Radzey, Udo
Rega, Harry W.
Regensburger, Armin
Reimer, Dietmar
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Reith, Klaus
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Riefenstahl, Leni
Ritter, Heinz
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Scheier, Werner
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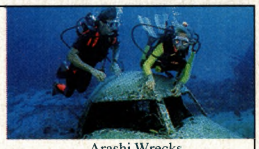
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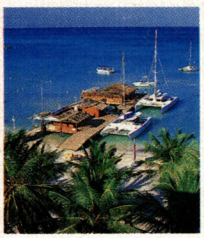

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Cafiero, Gaetano
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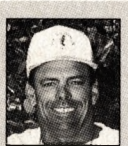

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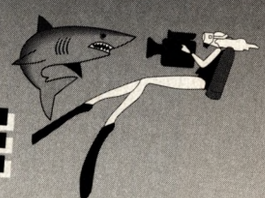

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MARES GUARDIAN

(Continued from Page 10)

will show up as asterisks on a graph on the left side of the screen. Errors tracked include: missed decompression stops; ascent rate violations; making a repetitive dive less than two hours after a previous dive; making a decompression dive; diving deeper than 130 feet; making a repetitive dive deeper than the previous dive; making a repetitive dive to a depth greater than 100 feet.

The Guardian comes in a special carrying case that protects it during storage or travel.

If you like to use dive simulation as a training or planning tool the Guardian accommodates you, allowing you to simulate dives (you can make more than one in a session) in one-fifth time. With some computers simulations can be complicated, with the Guardian they're only a matter of pressing buttons.

The Guardian's logbook data is quite detailed. The History tracks the total number of dives; total number of dive hours; absolute maximum depth reached; and the minimum temperature ever recorded on a dive. The Logbook stores data from the last 30 dives, including: year, month, day and time the dive started; the dive number; the maximum depth, dive time and errors made, including ascent rate and decompression stop violations; and whether the dive was no decompression or decompression.

COMPARISON OF MARES COMPUTERS

Model	Genius	Divemate	Guardian
Price	$1,150	$559	$415
Case	Lightweight polycarbonate	Lightweight polycarbonate	Lightweight technopolymer
Weight in Air	Computer 3.5 oz.; transmitter 3.5 oz.	3.8 oz.	9.17 oz.
Method of Air Integration	Scuba tank pressure is transmitted to the computer via radio waves	N/A	N/A
Method of Attachment	Wrist mount for computer; transmitter threads into regulator HP port	Wrist mount or attached to mask strap	Wrist or hose mount
Depth Range	330 feet	216 feet	490 feet
Rate of Ascent Warning	Audible alarm and flashing slow arrow. Rate varies with depth and is shown as a percentage.	Audible alarm and flashing arrow	Audible alarm and flashing "slow." Rate varies with depth and is shown as a percentage.
Decompression Stops	Numerical display of depth, stop time and total ascent time plus deco display and upward arrow	Numerical display of depth, stop time and total time	Numerical display of depth, stop time, ascent time, max depth and total dive time
Battery Power	Special LR07, not user replaceable. Battery life 7 to 10 years.	User replaceable 3.6 volt lithium	Three, user replaceable AAA alkaline cells
Computer Activation	Immersion in water or by touching contacts with wet fingertips	Immersion in water or by touching contacts with wet fingertips	Immersion in water or by pressing yellow function key
Remarks	An ultra-advanced, compact, air integrated computer with no hose. Offers complete data before, during and after your dive—even factoring in workload and body temperature. Divelog information can be downloaded to a PC.	An advanced non-air integrated computer with the unique ability to visually and audibly relay vital dive information. Divelog information can be downloaded to a PC.	Entry level computer that advanced divers will love. Easy to use. Logs dive history and up to 30 individual dives. Switches from meters to feet; °F to °C. Display lights. Signals, displays and logs diver errors. Dive log data can be downloaded to PC.

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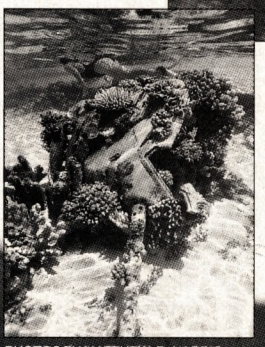
Frequent high-energy encounters with Reef Sharks, Pelagics, Whalesharks, Pilot Whales, Humpbacks, Sperm Whales and large schools of Jacks are common throughout the region. Only five hours from Hawaii, this Micronesian destination, complete with warm, crystal clear water, truly is a diver's adventure paradise.

PHOTO BY J. WATT



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW D. HARRIS

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Detailed profiles of the ten most recent dives are also stored and can be accessed. With an optional PC interface that plugs into the gold plated contacts on the Guardian's face, all of this data can be downloaded.

USER COMMENTS

Safety stop: "I particularly liked this feature—if you dive below one atmosphere, the Guardian automatically posts a three minute safety stop at 15 feet."

Readability: "The large display screen presents information that is easy to understand at a quick glance; the backlight feature was great for low light conditions."

Comfort: "The Guardian fit snugly and comfortably on my wrist and was remarkably unobtrusive during the dive."

CONCLUSION

Whew! Was there a feature you wanted that's not listed? It's hard for me to believe the Mares engineers left anything out! And here's another neat thing about the Guardian—it's Mares lowest priced dive computer, a bargain retailing for just $415. For more information or the name of a Mares dealer near you, please contact the company at Shore Pointe, One Selleck Street, Norwalk, Connecticut 06855; call (203) 855-0631 or fax (203) 866-9573.

Dive Notes

UNDERWATER WORLD: A revolutionary new aquarium—one of two opened in the U.S. this year—is making a splash at San Francisco's famed Pier 39 on the Embarcadero.

UnderWater World takes visitors into the fascinating habitats of sharks, Bat Rays, Sturgeon and thousands of silvery, schooling Herring. UnderWater World is a perfect snorkeling adventure—without getting wet—with the help of 300 feet of acrylic tunnels that guide visitors through 700,000 gallons of water.

Surrounding the people-moving tunnels is a spectacular array of rays and sharks, salmon, crabs and halibut. Sunflower Sea Stars, Purple Sea Urchins, Calico Surfperch and Rosy Rockfish create a spellbinding spectrum of life beneath the bay.

UnderWater World at Pier 39 is open daily, with seasonally changing hours. For current hours of operation, call (415) 623-5300. Admission is $12.95 for adults, $6.50 for children (ages 3 to 11) and $9.95 for seniors (ages 65 and more). Children two years old and younger receive free admission. A $2 discount is offered to riders of public transit.

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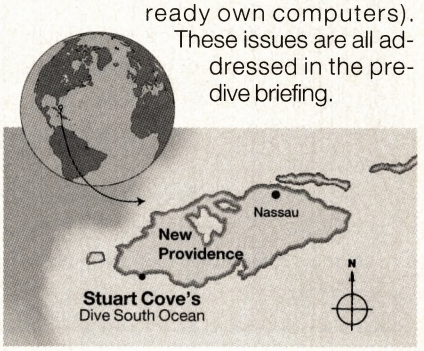
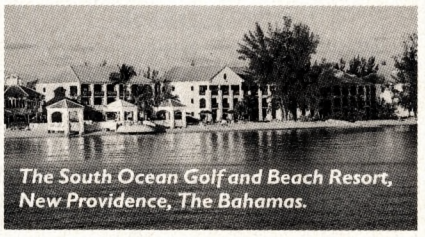
STUART COVE'S WALL FLYING

(Continued from Page 8)

the body, keep gauges out of the way and position an octopus so it doesn't purge air accidentally. It is also important to avoid rapid ascents/descents, maintain the buddy system and be able to read gauges while riding along on the scooter. Dive computers are required for the Wall Flying Adventure owing to the multi-level aspect of the profile (Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean rents Aladin Pro computers for those who don't already own computers). These issues are all addressed in the pre-dive briefing.





The South Ocean Golf and Beach Resort, New Providence, The Bahamas.

The scooters are loaded aboard a dive boat dedicated to the two tank Wall Flying Adventure. The first dive will visit a shipwreck in 40 to 50 feet of water, perhaps the island freighter ***Willaurie*** or the *James Bond* wreck ***Tears of Allah***. This provides a combination of coral reef and wreck as a backdrop while divers learn to maneuver the scooters in a safe and controlled environment. One dive is all it takes to become a proficient scooter diver. By the second dive, riders are doing barrel rolls, playing chicken and generally acting like squadron bombers.

This second dive of the program is what Wall Flying is all about. The boat moors at a special site along the wall and offloads divers and their vehicles. Then, as the group cruises more than a mile along the Tongue of the Ocean, the boat motors on ahead and picks up a different mooring. The whole thing is a sort of motorized drift dive. Underwater guides make sure everyone knows where the boat is. Rather than making a boring safety stop hanging on a line, the group does a "safety scoot," a three to five minute buzz around the reef at 15 feet to offgas. What happens in between being offloaded and the safety scoot is the grand adventure of Wall Flying.

A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON WALL FLYING: I felt a little naked entering the water without a camera but riding the scooter fulfilled my need to do something more than just sightsee. The group started out in the same basic direction and, for the most part, we kept our guides in view but we didn't have to ride in formation. We picked the depth we were interested in, obviously choosing our deepest depth first and gradually working up the wall as our personal interests dictated.

There were dozens of Caribbean Reef Sharks around at the beginning of the dive but when we zoomed too near they would tend to dart off. Given a respectful distance, the sharks stayed in the vicinity and provided a fascinating complement to what was a beautiful wall dive. I ventured no deeper than about 75 feet. I saw numerous Black and Nassau Groupers, a school of Horse-eye Jacks, a turtle, an Eagle Ray and, of course, plenty of tube sponges and deep water filter feeders. Of course, the big thing is that we covered so much of the wall in a single dive, probably more than a mile. No wonder we saw a lot!

The thrill of Wall Flying to me is much like riding a motorcycle. You can go fast but, unlike riding in a car, you are much more one with the environment. I felt like a participant more than an observer and for once I didn't feel clumsy and slow compared to almost any fish on the reef. The Wall Flying Adventure was really fun for me. Judging by the level of excitement and enthusiasm of the other guests, I'd say it was a big hit with everyone.

But, there is no way a scooter diver can buddy up with a nonscooter diver, so the most practical way to enjoy the full thrill of the DPV is with a program such as Stuart Cove's Wall Flying Adventure.

In addition to wall dives, Stuart Cove's Dive South Ocean also offers shallow reefs noted for pristine corals and abundant marine life (places such as **Pumpkin Patch** or **Southwest Reef**), five different shipwrecks (including the *Tears of Allah*, ***Vulcan Bomber***, ***Sea Viking*** and ***Bahama Mama***) and, of course, truly thrilling shark diving at **Shark Runway**, **Shark Arena** or along **Shark Wall**. These are all Caribbean Reef Shark encounters but there is also an exciting Silky Shark dive opportunity beneath a large tethered buoy in 6,000 feet of water. The **Shark Buoy** offers a rare chance to see open ocean pelagic life such as Dolphinfish, Wahoo, tuna and, of course, the star of the show, as many as a dozen Silkies.

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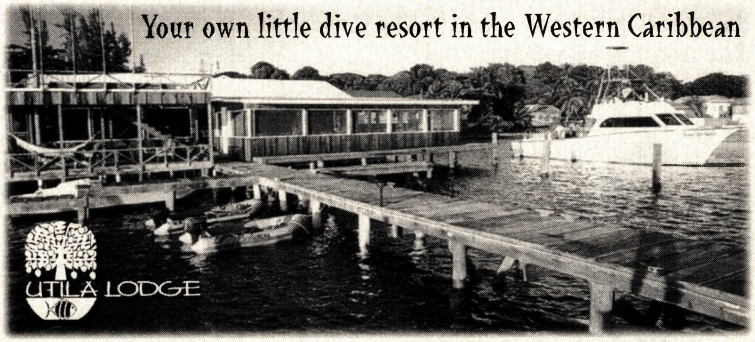

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STUART COVE'S WALL FLYING

credits that include most of the dive publications as well as broadcast television), Fin Photo offers E-6 film processing, camera and video rentals, custom still and video shoots, Cibachrome prints from slides and photo instruction. Guests are invited to charge their batteries, load cameras, edit film or even store their cameras overnight at Fin Photo.

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Dive Notes

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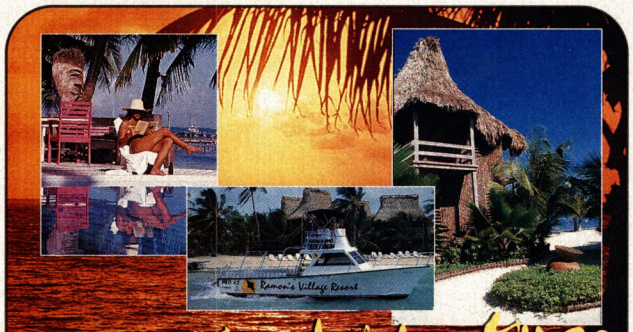

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Turneffe Island Lodge

A Sanctuary for the Senses

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY RICK FREHSEE

Top: Turneffe Island Lodge is a sanctuary for the senses. Above: The lodge's staff includes (from left to right): Owners Dallas and Bobbie Gaye, Michele Griffin, Warwick Lowe, Kevin Keith, Barbara Lowe and Darrin Paschal.

The horizon is a 360 degree panorama of ocean, sky and low lying mangrove isles. Below the sea is more coral reef than a diver could explore in a lifetime—one of the most complete and complex biospheres in the entire hemisphere. Conspicuous by its absence are the signs of civilization, human encroachment and development. Sighting another dive boat is still an unusual occurrence in this part of the western Caribbean.

Belize, a small and quiet Central American country, is more than an excellent compromise between comfort, services and environment. This is a destination that features an infinite and nearly undisturbed dive paradise. Lodgings on the atolls and outer cayes, where the diving is best, can be very comfortable. And, back on the mainland, there is a plethora of interesting Maya sites and a real tropical rain forest to explore. A one week dive package with a couple of days added for topside exploration can result in one of the most exciting adventure vacations available anywhere in the world.

The Turneffe Islands Atoll and the Turneffe Island Lodge are an excellent example of combining this adventure diving concept with charming and comfortable island living. Belize's offshore waters include the longest, most continuous section of barrier reef in the Caribbean and three of only four true coral atolls in the Western Hemisphere. Of the three atolls, Turneffe is the largest and closest to the Belize mainland. In many ways, it is also the most unusual. Provided with energy and primary productivity from a ringlet of frothy mangrove islets, it is a complete microcosm and the most biologically profuse of the three Belize atolls.

One of the best indications of this marine life smorgasbord can be found at the southeastern corner of the atoll. Here, at an extensive site called **The Elbow**, is a confluence of currents and trade winds. It results in a continuous feast beginning with plankton, sometimes so thick you can actually see swirls of reduced visibility in the water column. Responding to this sea soup are scads of tiny juveniles and schools of small tropical fishes. Next are hundreds of medium and large sized groupers, including a couple of 100 pound plus Jewfish and schools of snappers, grunts and Spadefish. Finally there are the schools of jacks, Kingfish, Wahoo, Permit and Mackerel and the occasional shark—ocean marauders

from the deep blue sea. Often, this entire spectacle can be seen within a single dive. More than 70 sites are known around the Turneffe Islands, from shallow sea gardens to medium depth reefs to plummeting, precipitous walls. And, all of these are found abundantly in all four quadrants. No one knows how many really good sites are left to be discovered; the atoll, roughly oblong or kidney shaped, is 20 miles long and 7 miles wide, approximately the same size as Grand Cayman, Cozumel or Bonaire. Turneffe is a dive universe all by itself, the main difference being that the entire atoll is nearly deserted.

At the extreme southern end of Turneffe Atoll, on a small caye just inside Caye Bokel, is the charming, self-contained diving/fishing resort known as the Turneffe Island Lodge. It is an established and modern dedicated diving village. The mixing of a small group of divers with a handful of fishermen is not only compatible, it is complementary. Both groups love the sea and both are essentially conservationists. (Modern divers "leave only bubbles, take only memories," while modern sportsfishermen "catch and release" specific gamefish.) Furthermore, the primary fishing in the Turneffe Islands is on the inside flats, not over the reefs.

Turneffe Island Lodge is owned by Dallas and Bobby Gaye and their sons, Jeff and Tommy—a diving/ fishing family from Gainesville, Georgia. Warwick and Barbara Lowe, a personable couple experienced in diving, sailing and hospitality, are the resort's management team.

The property is on the fringe of a small islet, a crescent of one and two-story buildings facing a beach, dock and lagoon. There are five guest buildings—three duplex and two triplex guestrooms, a mainhouse lodge, dive operations and various support buildings. The resort is very self-sufficient, with an excellent restaurant, new and oversized electrical generators, purified water supply, etc.

The Turneffe guest cottages are spacious, comfortable and charmingly furnished in island decor. The upstairs of the mainhouse is the handsome lounge, restaurant and social room. Belizean chef Merlin Williams, who has been at the resort for 10 years, prepares sumptuous meals of island and continental cuisine served familystyle. Homemade breads and desserts, local fruit and seafood, in-

(Continued on Page 136)

A diver hovers over Yellow Tube Sponges in the clear blue waters of the Turneffe Islands Atoll.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

The Turneffe Island Lodge is best known for:

- The Elbow
- Marine life smorgasbord
- Thick swarms of fish
- Uncrowded diving
- Great Blue Hole dive

Experience a Wilderness Retreat at Utila Lodge in The Bay Islands

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK FREHSEE

Top: A Barracuda waits in the shadows. Above: The **Sea Sprite,** *a 41 foot Morgan, stands ready to deliver divers to Utila's unforgettable diving. Right: The Utila Lodge sits directly over the water on stilts.*

You land on an airstrip of crushed coral, smoothed over a natural limestone flat at one end of town. After collecting your baggage, you are whisked away in a pickup truck through the village to your seaside hideaway on the opposite side of civilization. The town is pleasant—a cluster of stilt-mounted cottages at the edge of a crescent shaped lagoon. Painted in gay colors and pastels and decorated with fruit and flower trees, they provide a fairy tale presence for the local population; mostly fisherman, sailors, farmers and shopkeepers. Until recently, the better known islands of Roatan and Guanaja had absorbed nearly all of the divers who had found their way to the Bay Islands of Honduras. Now it is easy to see that things in Utila, the third largest island in the chain, are changing. On the way through town, I counted more than 20 signs or dive flags that announced instruction or reef trips.

Still a cottage industry, dive travel has become somewhat of a bonanza, a sort of gold rush mentality within the otherwise very laidback one town island community.

Anyone interested in the history of dive travel would be intrigued by Utila. It is easy to recognize the similarities between the Utila of today and the Grand Cayman of 30 years ago. (Ironically, a large percentage of the residents came here from the Cayman Islands in the 1830s.)

The question, of course, is how good is the diving in Utila? Is it an absolute dive paradise, superior to many established, popular dive destinations or merely the flavor of the month? The truth lies somewhere in between. At the very least, those who travel to Utila will find an uncrowded dive wilderness and a pretty little island inhabited by pleasant and peaceful folks. The island is surrounded by a variety of reefs, pinnacles and precipitous walls. There is also a rich assortment of marine life, including some intriguing invertebrates such as rare tunicates and nudibranchs not often or easily seen elsewhere. Whale Shark sightings occur here more often than anywhere else in the Caribbean.

In addition to a handful of small mom and pop hotels, there are currently three dedicated dive resorts on Utila. All are at the edge of or just outside town. The best established and most popular is the Utila Lodge, opened just four years ago. It's a charming cottage style resort suspended on stilts at the edge of a lagoon. Complete and self-contained with eight spacious air-conditioned rooms and an impressive dive center, the lodge is an excellent small group getaway. The restaurant (three tasty and ample meals

are served per day) and bar are in the screened mainhouse facing the resort docks and sea. Jim and Kisty Engle, owners of the Utila Lodge, are personable, attentive and very experienced in hotel, dive shop and dive tour operations. Chances are you will find Willy Waterhouse, the primary boat captain, the most unforgettable of the resort's mostly local employees. Willy is an encyclopedia of local diving, fishing and general island lore.

The main dive vessel is the *Sea Sprite*—a 41 foot Morgan with a cabin and fly bridge. This vessel is completely outfitted for practical and safe diving. The dive package includes three boat dives per day, two night boat dives per week and unlimited shore diving. The actual schedule can be adjusted to suit the small number of guests each week. Dive sites (more than 40) are off in every quadrant of the island, which can be easily circumnavigated in a normal day of diving aboard *Sea Sprite*.

Interestingly, Utila sits directly upon the continental shelf of Honduras. This creates an exaggerated variety of bottom topography. The visibility varies between 40 and 120 feet. The south coast faces a shelf lined with dramatic reef pinnacles that rise from a sandy bottom, often more than 200 feet deep. The top of the pinnacle rises to within 60 to 80 feet of the surface, creating craggy peaks decorated with deep water sponges, fans and exotic Black Corals. Among the shallow reefs on the south side, often referred to as coral gardens, are many individual species of unusual origin, such as Big-eyed Toadfish, bulbous clusters of orange and purple tunicates and many rare nudibranchs. During night dives on the shallow southern reefs, I have found Flying Gurnards, Northern Stargazers, several species of toadfish and many octopi.

The north coast of Utila faces the abyss and here are some of the island's most dramatic dives. The reef topography varies greatly depending upon whether the site is adjacent to a rocky coastline, a bay or lagoon, or a flat beach. Beneath the surface you can find spur and groove formations, reef pinnacles, a shallow mini-wall (actually a submerged ancient wave notch) or a precipitous drop-off plummeting to unseen depths. Because of the closeness of deep water to the shoreline, it is always possible to sight pelagics such as jacks, Wahoo and even Marlin.

Utila and the passage between this island and Roatan is known as a Whale Shark corridor. Sightings average one every two weeks, indicating a fair chance of an encounter during a week-long visit. Whale Shark expeditions are launched between dives, where seabirds and baitfish activity is monitored. Beneath this feeding frenzy cruises the Whale Shark, the largest fish in the sea.

SDM TRAVEL AT A GLANCE

Utila is best known for:

- Seasonal Whale Sharks
- Unusual fish species
- Plummeting walls
- Coral gardens
- Uncrowded reefs

Time off from diving is easily spent in leisurely island discovery. Besides the town, there are a couple of seaside, cave laced, remnant volcanic peaks to explore. For those who have only seen developed, tourist islands, Utila is what the Caribbean used to be.

For more information, contact Roatan Charter, Inc., at (800) 282-8932.

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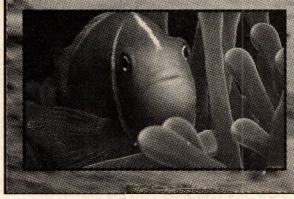

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TURNEFFE ISLAND LODGE

(Continued from Page 133)

cluding a dinner of Stone Crab claws, were served during our stay. Coffee service to your guestroom, ready one-half hour before breakfast, is available daily.

Turneffe Dive Services is at the resort main dock. There are new and well maintained tanks and rental gear. Most impressive is the massive air system. Nicknamed "the Beast," it is an 8,500 pound, 120 cfm, 18 station air compressor with the capability of filling an 80 cubic foot tank in about 45 seconds. This kind of overabundance and redundancy provides confidence and security with the daily services. Video and still camera

rentals are also available. Kevin Keith, Michele Griffin and Darrin Paschal are the managers and divemasters. Kevin also provides a professionally produced and edited video souvenir service.

The resort dive boat fleet is extensive, ranging from the 45 foot *Bodacious*, primarily used for guest transfers, to the mid-sized, 38 foot *Grand Slam* and 30 foot *Good Times* to a pair of 25 footers, the *Boss* and *Cool Dive*. In addition, there is a fleet of outboard skiffs used primarily for backcountry fly fishing.

The weekly, 16 dive package from Saturday to Saturday offers 8:30 am, 10:30 am and 2:30 pm single tank boat dives with night dives replacing the afternoon dive once or twice each week. All day picnic dives are also available, including the special **Lighthouse Reef/Great Blue Hole** diving day normally available each week. This is a superb outing that combines a descent into the famous Blue Hole, pristine wall diving and an adventure picnic on a sandy, palm-covered isle complete with a booby and frigate bird rookery.

American, Continental and TACA fly from the U.S. to Belize City daily. Representatives from the resort will meet you at the airport and transfer you to the dock for the 30 mile trip in protected waters to the Turneffe Island Lodge. Call for information and reservations at (800) 874-0118; fax (770) 534-8290.

CUAN LAW

(Continued from Page 41)

caddie to carry your tank and hand you your camera with the correct lens for each shot but almost everything short of that is done for you on *Cuan Law*. The routine is simple and convenient: throw on a shorty, pull your mask, fins and weightbelt out of your private bin and step up to the waist-high platform where Johanna or Gavin has your BC waiting. Buckle up and step away, ready to go. When you come back aboard, putting your tank away is less trouble than checking your coat at a restaurant.

Most of the diving is done from a pair of new 20 foot rigid hull inflatables. The fiberglass V-hulls also give them a much smoother ride. There is no awkward climbing necessary to board the inflatables, just walk down a wide ladder to a broad platform where a crew member is waiting to help you get seated.

Alice's Wonderland, off the rocky cliffs of Ginger Island, offers acres of coral ridges and mounds, piled high during centuries of industrious growth by Star and Brain Corals. The diving is excellent at any depth from 20 feet down to about 80. The lobster here make restaurant-sized crustaceans seem like mere bugs. **Carvel Rock** rises abruptly from the bottom of the deep channel between Ginger and Cooper Islands. A comfortable pace will let you cover about half of the rock's underwater circumference, which is liberally coated with green and orange sponges, seafans and globes of brain coral. Queen Angelfish, French Angelfish, Spadefish and Horse-eye Jacks are nearly always in residence but the mid-channel location of the rock is likely to attract almost anything. **Coral Garden** is an excellent shallow dive, day or night. Octopus, Spiny Lobster and Nurse Sharks are often seen among the large boulders of Star Coral.

The colorful canyons at **Painted Walls** are like corridors in an underwater art gallery. Three parallel passages with vertical walls run perpendicular to Dead Chest Island, each with vivid coatings of corals and sponges. Nurse Sharks and Hawksbill Turtles are likely to be resting in the passageways or roaming at the entrance. There are lots of interesting smaller creatures, too, such as Fingerprint *Cyphoma* and Atlantic Deer Cowry. The Pillar Coral at Painted Walls has grown from several large colonies to a dozen or so healthy patches.

When the wind is from the right direction, the submerged pinnacles at **Santa Monica Rocks** are an interesting dive with lots of craggy overhangs. The vertical rise attracts many fish, including Barracuda, Bar Jacks, Horse-eye Jacks and cruising Cero Mackerel. Reef fish such as Rock Beauties and Stoplight Parrotfish are prolific among the sponges and corals. The freighter ***Inganess Bay*** was sunk in 80 feet of water between Salt Island and Cooper Island in August of 1996, creating an interesting new wreck dive that will steadily improve as the ocean claims it.

The Royal Mail Ship ***Rhone*** is consistently voted one of the ten best wrecks in the world and the appellation is well deserved. The vessel rests in two main sections off Salt Island, near the formation called Black Rock upon which it broke in two during a hurricane in 1867. The bow, with its graceful bowsprit, is about 80 feet at the deepest part. The stern section, with the propeller and rudder intact, is much shallower. Scattered between are boilers, deck supports and other pieces, many holding fascinating relics of the ship such as tools or silverware. The holds are lined with Orange Cup Corals and filled with schools of snappers and jacks. Almost every solid surface of the wreck is covered with a kaleidoscope of corals and sponges. Diving the *Rhone* from *Cuan Law* is particularly nice because on two out of the three scheduled dives, an early morning dive and a spectacular night dive, you have the wreck to yourselves.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

The British Virgin Islands are only a hop, skip and a jump from anywhere in the U.S. American Airlines flies to Tortola via San Juan, Puerto Rico, with a choice of several flights each day. U.S. citizens can enter the BVI with a certified birth certificate or voter's registration, along with a photo ID or a passport. T-shirts, shorts and bathing suits are the standard outfit on *Cuan Law*, with perhaps a warmup suit for the sometimes cooler winter evenings.

For reservations or more information about *Cuan Law*, call Trimarine at (800) 648-3393. If you have any special requests or just want to talk directly with owners Duncan and Annie Muirhead, call them at (809) 494-2490. You can also reach them by fax at (809) 494-5774 or write to Trimarine at P.O. Box 4065, St. Thomas, USVI 00803.

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TECHNIFACTS

(Continued from Page 75)

supplied or self-contained. The depth and duration of the dive and the expected job demands will usually dictate the kind of equipment and breathing gas used.

Owing to several aspects of the work involved, commercial diving has been divided into several classifications. Within these classifications there may be specialty diving and work qualifications. The two major areas of work—therefore the main classifications—are offshore diving and inland diving. There are several others that employ fewer divers.

OFFSHORE DIVING

Offshore diving usually refers to the offshore oil industry. There is some diving, however, that is not oil related and is done far offshore. However, in this Technifacts, offshore diving will refer to the oil industry and the various phases of diving devoted to it.

The offshore oil industry started in 1947 when a well was drilled off the Louisiana coast in 18 feet of water. By the late 1950s, oil had been found in much deeper water off California. Diving has always been critical to the continually expanding industry. Chevron will soon start producing oil from nearly 2,600 feet of water in the Gulf of Mexico. In 1996, almost 60 years after the first offshore well was drilled, Exxon is challenging the oil industry with a well planned for 4,880 feet, also in the Gulf of Mexico. It truly will be a 21st century well. Also planned for the next century is a dual underwater pipeline across the Arabian Sea between the countries of Oman and India. It will reach depths of 11,483 feet at a pressure of 5,100 psi.

Our present technology does not permit divers to work at the great pressures of the above depths. I believe suited divers should not be subjected to the unknown risks such deep diving will carry. However, diver operated equipment will likely be used on most deep water jobs.

From the first offshore well in 18 feet of water to the present, there have been many changes in diving technology. However, nearly all underwater work was done using various surface supplied diving equipment. Later, the use of saturation diving permitted longer, deeper work by divers. Knowledge that makes all prevalent forms of diving relatively safe has been researched and tested. Equipment has also kept pace with oil industry requirements.

INLAND DIVING

Primarily because of concern about the safety of aging infrastructures of dam and bridge systems, inland diving has become an important aspect of commer-

cial diving. In the United States the government has mandated annual dam and bridge inspections. In most cases, this involves inland divers using helmet or bandmask equipment. In some of these structures, diving to greater depths has required mixed gas or saturation diving equipment and techniques.

Inland diving also includes inspection, maintenance and construction of many harbor installations such as piers, marine railways and boat and ship moorings. Nearly all hull inspections, cleaning, minor repairs and propeller servicing are accomplished by inland divers. Near shore underwater work on pipelines, moorings and related tasks is usually done by inland divers. Inland diving is as diverse and demanding as offshore work.

Safe, successful and rewarding commercial diving involves much more than proper training, equipment and good diving techniques. When divers work with others on private or public property, legal responsibility, liability and insurance must be faced. In the months ahead, Technifacts will periodically review various aspects of commercial diving in detail. Primarily, the information will be designed so recreational divers can relate this aspect of diving to their own—or potential—qualifications.

SKIN DIVER readers who have specific questions about any aspect of commercial diving are invited to write to E. R. Cross, c/o Technifacts, SKIN DIVER Magazine, 6420 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048-5515. Whether you are interested in your qualifications as a scuba diver or the additional training you may need to go commercial, Technifacts may be able to help in your decisions. Also, Technifacts can provide information about the equipment you will use in commercial diving, job skills that may be required or a potential future in any phase of diving. Before going commercial, know where you are going.

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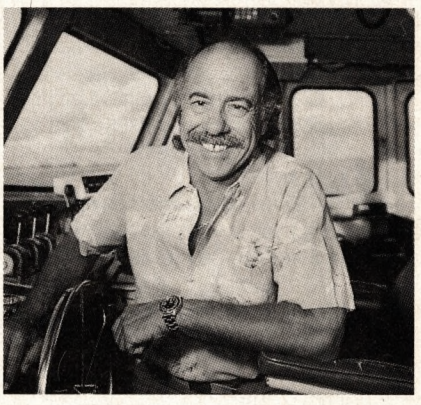
SEA FEVER

(Continued from Page 117)

Shark and, perhaps the most aggressive of the lot, a pair of Black Groupers, obviously accustomed to being handfed. A drift dive along the tidal flow through **Wax Cut** provides a high velocity glimpse of gorgeous shallow reef comprised of brain and Star Corals punctuated by giant sponges and gorgonians.

Cat Island is a highlight of this itinerary and, as the *Sea Fever* visits the area with greater regularity, ever more exciting dives are logged. A pod of Spotted Dolphins off **Hawksnest** shows promise of future interaction and off **Port Howe** there is a series of pinnacles that top out at 50 feet and drop off into the deep blue abyss. Huge schools of grunts and goatfish inhabit these pinnacles but, as good as the reef critters are, it is always prudent to keep an eye seaward for the turtles and



Captain Tom Guarino, who began offering dive services in The Bahamas more than 20 years ago, has a treasure house of experience.

Eagle Rays frequently cruising past.

The *Sea Fever* is a 90 foot aluminum live-aboard that has been under nearly constant renovation and improvement since Captain Guarino bought her. She is powered by three 12 cylinder diesel engines and can cruise at 17 knots. Her cabin configurations are for 14 passengers in seven fully air-conditioned staterooms and there are amenities such as an E-6 darkroom, underwater video with 8mm and VHS decks for editing and playback, reverse osmosis watermaker, full marine electronics and a complete galley. The oversized dive deck has tank racks, a dive platform with extended ladders, camera table and freshwater rinse. For nitrox aficionados or those who wish to become PADI or IANTD nitrox certified, the *Sea Fever* is the first live-aboard to offer the UBS Nitrox membrane system to extract nitrogen from the air, thereby enhancing the percentage of oxygen necessary in enriched air mixes. This system eliminates the fire hazard that pure oxygen might present and does

not require dive gear to be oxygen clean.

For further information about the *Sea Fever* schedule of Bahamas dive adventures, phone (800) 443-3837 (44-FEVER) or (305) 531-3483 or write to P.O. Box 398276, Miami Beach, FL 33239. The e-mail address is seafever@safari.net or to visit their Web Site call up **http://www.seafever.com**.

Dive Notes

CARIB INN'S CLEAN UP BONAIRE CAMPAIGN: Bruce Bowker, owner and manager of the Carib Inn, has once again started the weekly Clean Up Bonaire campaign. Three years ago he and a group of dedicated people went out every Saturday to pick up major dump sites. For 56 weeks straight they cleaned up everything from cars to kitchen sinks.

On Saturdays at 9:00 am the Pick it Up truck leaves the Carib Inn for a new area. If you are interested in helping, be at the Carib Inn at 8:45 am any Saturday. The team has picked up more than 25 truck loads to date.

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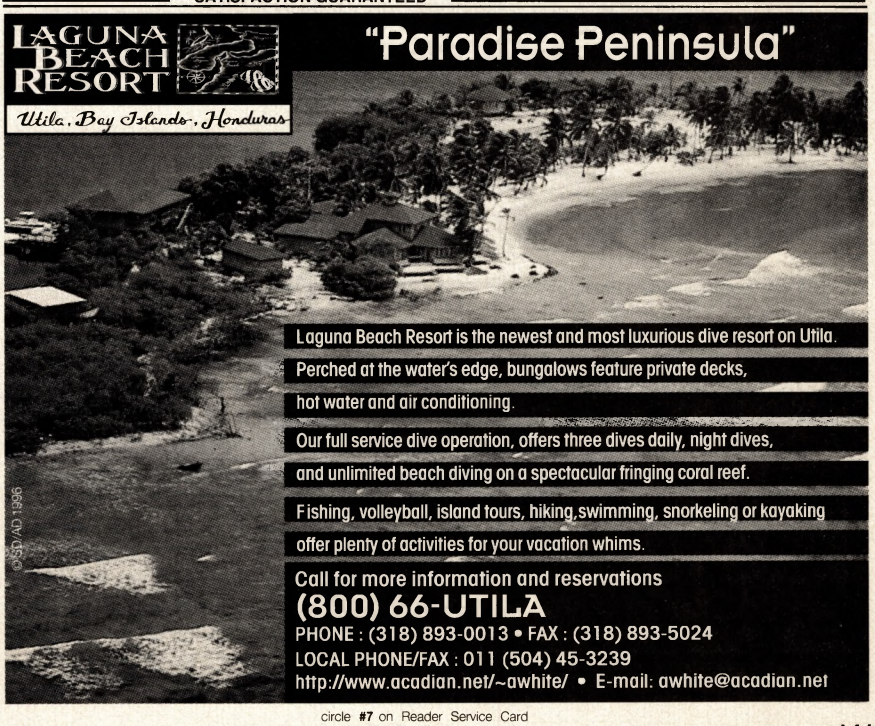

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SEA QUEST DIVA QD

(Continued from Page 26)

shedding the BC a snap.

Sea Quest's focus on convenience and safety is exhibited in the design of its tank support system, which uses three components to secure the tank. The Contour Pack is a curved, hard plastic backpack that cradles the tank. It has a rubber Traction Pad insert to minimize the possibility of slippage. The tank band holds the system together with a wide nylon webbing strap that threads through a standard ABS plastic cam action buckle and closes with a touch-fastening strip.

Tank and accessory attachment (the Diva has two D-rings and a female quick-release clip for accessories) are secondary to the BC's principal functions, which are assisting with neutral buoyancy, surface flotation and controlling the rate of descent/ascent. The components that provide the diver with superior control over these functions are the Trimline Inflator and rear dump valve. Tucked into the compact, low profile Trimline Inflator is the low pressure hose. The whole unit is held close to the diver's body with a touch-fastening airway retainer. An ergonomically positioned blue power inflation button lets you inflate the BC at the surface or add air at depth to trim your buoyancy. The BC can also be inflated orally.

There are four ways to vent air from the Diva QD. First is the BC's built-in safety mechanism that automatically vents air from a relief valve if the pressure inside the BC exceeds about 2.5 psi. The diver can also vent air through this same valve (at the top of the inflator hose) by pulling gently on the inflator unit. While descending head first, the diver has the convenient option of venting air through the rear dump valve, found on the lower right side. Any remaining air can be exhausted in a head up position by holding the inflation unit over the head and depressing the oral inflation/deflation button.

The Diva QD is not for prima donnas; it is not a "girly" BC. It is an advanced piece of equipment that includes most of the innovations found in Sea Quest's top of the line BCs. You can wrap yourself in the comfort and security of this nearly custom fit BC with integrated weights for only $460. It is available in black/purple/spruce or black/raspberry in sizes extra small through medium large.

COMPARISON OF SEA QUEST BUOYANCY COMPENSATORS

Model	Black Diamond	Spectrum 4	Balance	Diva QD	Quickdraw	Predator	Diva	Dimension XP	Spectrum 3	Excel	Spectrum 2	Spectrum 1
Price	$580	$480	$460	$460	$440	$435	$430	$410	$400	$360	$325	$225
Fabric	840 denier nylon	1050, 840 denier nylon outside, 420 inside	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	840 denier nylon outside 420 inside	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon	420 denier nylon
Pockets	Three	Two	One roll-out hide-a-pocket	Two zippered	Two zippered	Two touch-fastening	Two zippered	Two touch-fastening	Two zippered	Two zippered	Two touch-fastening	One touch-fastening
Backpack	Contour pack with traction pad	Adjustable integral w/ traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Fixed integral w/ traction pad	Contour pack with traction pad	Fixed integral w/ traction pad	Fixed integral w/ traction pad
Sizes/ Lift (lbs.)	S, M ML, L XL—50	S—23 M—26 ML—30 L—40 XL—45	S—30, M, ML—36 L—40, XL—50	XS—18 S—23 M—28 ML—31	S—23 M—26 ML—30 L—40 XL—45	M—28 ML—31 L—36 XL—42	XS—18 S—23 M—28	S—30 M—36 ML—36 L—40 XL—50	XS—18 S—23 M—26 ML—30 L—40 XL—45 XXL—45	S—24 M—28 ML—28 L—36 XL—42	S—23 M—26 ML—30 L—40 XL—45	XS—18 S—23 M—26 ML—30 L—40 XL—40
Colors	Black	Black Black/blue, Black/ raspberry	Black, Black/blue, Black/ yellow	Black/ purple/ spruce, Black/ raspberry	Black, Black/blue	Black with gray/red accents	Black/ purple/ spruce, Black/ raspberry, Black/blue	Black/ blue, Black/lime	Black, Black/ blue, Black/ raspberry, Black/ yellow	Black/ Black/blue	Black, Black/ blue/ lime	Black, Blue/blue
Comments	Three dimensional bladder. Integral Weight Holster release system, holds up to 32 pounds. Accommodates double cylinders. Intended for use by advanced/ professional divers.	Heavy duty fabric and adjustable tank cradle. Suitable for all types of diving.	Integral Weight Holster release system holds 20 pounds of releasable weight and 10 pounds of non-releasable weight in rear pockets. Swivel buckle. Tripoint load distribution system.	Designed just for women. Integral Weight Holster release system (same as Balance and Quickdraw). Patent pending women's harness endorsed by Women's Scuba Association.	Integral Weight Holster release system.	Low profile, single bladder design with all adjustments. Suitable for tough conditions in warm or cold water. Two small pockets. Stainless steel D-rings.	Designed just for women. Patent pending women's harness endorsed by Women's Scuba Association.	Back mounted air chamber with pleats for three dimensional expansion. Low profile harness. Optional integral Weight Holster system.	Same as Spectrum 4 with lighter fabric and non-adjustable tank cradle.	Streamlined, low profile design. Ideal for warm and cold water divers. Dynalastic "stretch" air chamber.	Fully featured but without the "extras."	Sea Quest's most economical model. Great rental BC.

Two rear non-releasable weight pockets hold five pounds each; there is a dump valve below the pocket on the right.

User Comments

Comfort: "The Diva QD is supremely comfortable. The waistband hugged my waist and fit its contours, keeping the weight of the tank and weights off my hipbones. The elastic, Lycra chest panels were nonrestrictive and facilitated easy breathing. My tank was secure in its Contour Pack throughout the dive day. There was no tank wobble or slippage."

Integrated weights: "The integrated weight system brought simplicity, safety and a streamlined profile to my dive experience. I was well balanced underwater and my hipbones came out unscathed."

Buoyancy control: "The Trimline Inflator and inflation button were easy to access underwater. The inflator was sensitive to small adjustments and I felt the results right away. Having three ways to vent air made it easy to trim my buoyancy in any position."

For more information or the name of your nearest dealer, call Sea Quest at (619) 438-1101, fax (619) 438-3142 or write to 2151 Las Palmas Drive, Carlsbad, CA 92009.

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DIVING MEDICINE

(Continued from Page 58)

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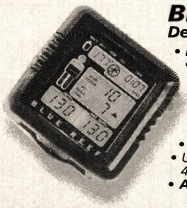

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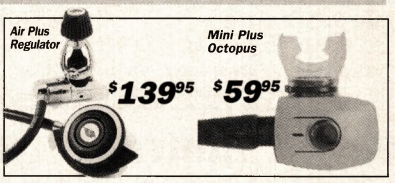

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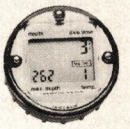

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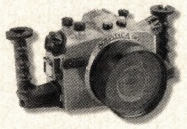

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Dive Notes

BENEATH THE SEA'S NEW INSTANT FAX-BACK SERVICE: Armand Zigahn, president of Beneath The Sea, the USA-East Dive Exposition, has announced a new service: Instant Fax-Back for dive show exhibitors and the dive consumer seeking information by return fax about the show. To receive exhibitor information instantly by return fax, call (800) 227-5638, ext. 129. Or, to receive attendee information instantly by return fax, call (800) 227-5638, ext. 129. The information provided will be the latest to date.

The 21st annual show will take place March 21 to 23 at the Meadowlands Exposition Center, Secaucus, New Jersey—only minutes from downtown New York City.

Additional information may be found on the Internet at http://www.cyberus.ca/~bts/. All exhibitors with Web Sites will be listed on Beneath The Sea's site. E-mail may be sent to zig4bts@aol.com. For more information, call (914) 664-4310 or fax (914) 664-4315.

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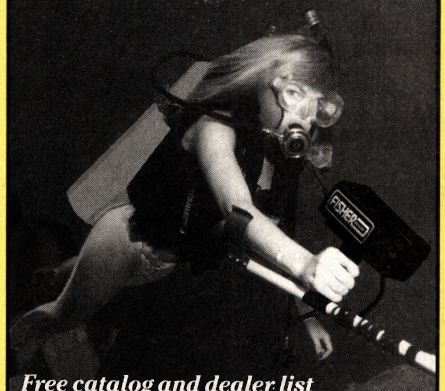

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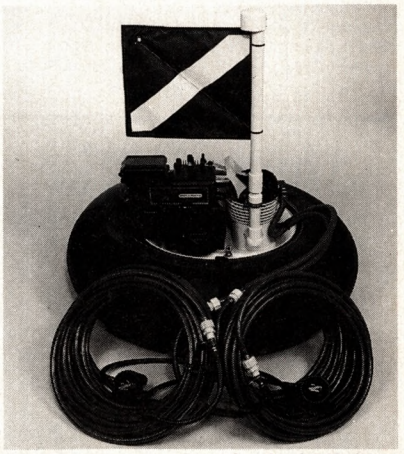

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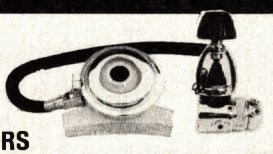

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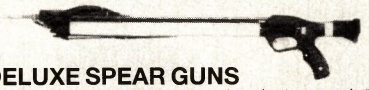

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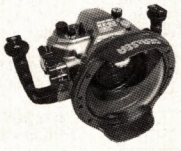
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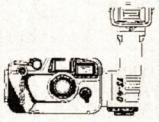
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Dive Notes

PRINCESS CRUISES AND PADI OFFER PROGRAM: Princess Cruises, a leader in its industry, has joined the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), the world's largest diver certification organization, to offer its New Waves scuba diving and snorkeling program.

First introduced in 1991, the New Waves program now incorporates PADI training standards and is conducted by PADI certified dive instructors. Passengers aboard Caribbean-bound Princess cruise ships can become PADI certified open water divers during their travels. Princess Cruises remains the only major cruise line on which passengers can become scuba certified.

In addition to becoming certified divers, passengers have several other opportunities to explore the undersea environment. As part of the New Waves program, Princess also offers PADI's Discover Scuba Diving, which allows uncertified passengers to dive in shallow waters; a PADI pool experience called Discover Scuba; and PADI's Discover Snorkeling. For certified divers needing a quick review, Princess offers an onboard PADI Scuba Review. The New Waves program is available on the *Sun Princess*, *Crown Princess*, *Dawn Princess* and *Star Princess*.

For more information on the Princess Cruises/PADI New Waves program, contact a professional travel agent.

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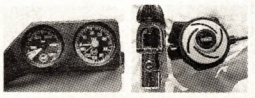

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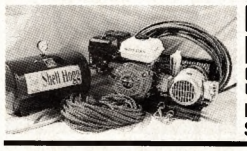

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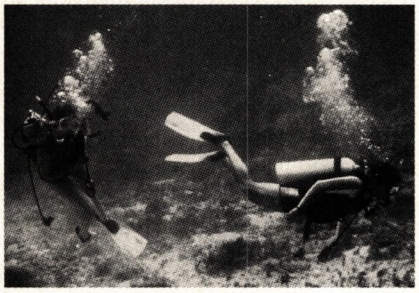

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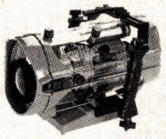

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Dive Notes

THE WORLD'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL DIVE FESTIVAL: Explorer Jean-Michel Cousteau, one of the world's leading environmentalists and diving experts, will be among the featured speakers at the world's first International Dive Festival, A Celebration of the Oceans—Fiji Islands, to be held April 20 to 28 in Fiji. This will be the largest gathering of diving experts and authorities ever assembled in the Asia/Pacific area.

Sponsored by the Fiji Dive Operators Association and the Fiji Visitors Bureau, the festival will begin at the Sheraton Royal Denarau with a day of world-class lectures from a host of leading international diving personalities, including Jean-Michel Cousteau, followed by an international underwater film festival. Festival attendees will then break up into predetermined groups and fly to participating resorts to experience a number of diving activities. A total of 19 resorts and live-aboards are participating by offering unique experiences designed to make this festival accessible to every budget.

For those who choose to attend the program offered at the Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort, in Savusavu on the island of Vanua Levu, three activities will be featured. First, Ernest Brooks, CEO of Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California, will share his secrets of underwater black and white photography. Second, Don Santee, a long time associate of Jean-Michel Cousteau, will demonstrate the innovative nitrox rebreather. Finally, Dr. Richard Murphy, also a long time associate of Jean-Michel, will run the natural history program entitled "Sex, Violence and Survival on the Reef."

Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort is a joint venture with the exclusive Post Ranch Inn at Big Sur, California. Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji features L'Aventure Jean-Michel Cousteau, a unique diving activities center personally overseen by Jean-Michel and his team of diving professionals. L'Aventure provides all that the adventurous guest needs to explore the waters of Fiji, including an on-site lab for processing underwater photos.

To participate in the World's First International Dive Festival, contact a dive travel agent or the Fiji Visitors Bureau in Suva. For reservations to the exclusive resort, call the Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort North America Reservation Center directly at (415) 788-5794 or (800) 246-3454.

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A Wreck Dive Gone Awry–Out of Air and Shooting Toward the Surface

BY MICHAEL BRATONJA

I've been diving for 34 years. I have spent much of that time exploring the Great Lakes. This story takes place on one of those days when Lake Michigan was very calm; the air temperature was right around 85°F; the water was 43°F and the visibility, 15 feet. It's not exactly the Florida Keys but we like it and our wrecks are in better shape.

I sat at the back of the boat getting the last of my gear in order. With a nod, my partner and I hit the water and began our descent into the dark, lonely, cold world below. We arrived on the stern deck of the Grand Trunk Western Railroad's *Milwaukee* at 90 feet. My favorite wreck, the *Milwaukee* is the second largest ship ever to sink in Lake Michigan. Below us were multitudes of decks going down 45 feet; her bow was 318 feet away. She remains pretty much the same as when she sank. From the bent sea gate to the twisted hull, there is clear evidence that Lake Michigan was in a real evil mood when she swatted down the *Milwaukee* in October of 1929.

This was a great dive for me. It was only my third dive with my new drysuit but I was smitten with it.

My problems occurred on our second dive. I entered the water with 2,000 psi remaining in my twin 80s. We found a large rip in the hull and swam in very slowly to avoid stirring up the sediment. I clipped a line to the entrance of the rip. The beams from our lights reflected off the chunks of white porcelain that had spilled from the railroad cars full of Kohler toilets and sinks. We were about 50 feet inside when we ran into a wall that shouldn't have been there. My buddy signaled he was going to try to go around it and I signaled I would descend and look for a way under it. I glanced at my gauges and noted that I still had 1,200 psi with another 1,000 in reserve.

As I reached the bottom I found what appeared to be very large wheels. I was almost 120 feet down and my mind was a little slow but I finally realized I was looking at a railroad car that had come loose.

I was having trouble maintaining my depth—I was too buoyant—so I stopped to let some air out of my suit. I even tried crouching up to squeeze air out but I was still positively buoyant. I started reeling in line as I headed for the gap. I was no longer concerned about my discoveries, I just wanted out of this overgrown steel coffin.

As I emerged into open water I felt a little better. My greatest fear has always been being trapped in a ship with nothing to do but watch my gauges go to zero. I looked around but didn't see my partner. I started for the ascent line. It was a good 100 feet ahead of me and I was really pumping those fins to stay down. I grabbed the railing that goes around the ship but since it didn't intersect with the ascent line reaching it would be a struggle.

I LEARNED

Mistake number one:
I hadn't accounted for the buoyancy of my tanks when empty.

Mistake number two:
I lost my buddy.

Mistake number three:
I didn't check the amount of air in my reserve tank.

I was breathing too fast. Halfway to the ascent line my air ran out. I yanked on my reserve but discovered it was empty. I looked at my gauge. It said Z-E-R-O! I couldn't believe it. It was a hard pill to swallow but with all my experience I had messed up.

During the next five seconds my mind processed all the facts and rushed the outcome to me. You're going to die! And on your favorite wreck, too! I spent the next 10 seconds occupied by reasons why I didn't want to go.

I tried to get my line around the rail so I could make a controlled ascent but my hands were shaking so badly I couldn't tie the line. I was sure I would have air if I ascended, since air in scuba tanks expands as ambient pressure decreases. My starving lungs interrupted this thought to explain there was no more time. Forget the line—get out! I held the rail and allowed my body to float. I wanted to be inverted so I could use my fins to slow my ascent. I let go and floated toward the surface. As I passed 80 feet I got my first good breath. I couldn't dump air from my suit in this position so I watched my gauges intently. When I hit 20 feet I quickly turned around to dump air while spreading my legs for drag. I broke the surface three feet from the line, right next to my buddy. Turning to him I asked, "Have you enough air for the two of us to do four minutes at 20 feet and four at 10?" He said, "Yes" and we started down, although I found I had plenty of air in my tanks in water this shallow.

Waiting on the line gave me time to think about my mistakes. I had never emptied my tanks before so I had no idea how buoyant they were. I had checked my buoyancy with the new suit but my tanks had been half full. My second mistake was losing track of my buddy. During the last 10 years, I had considered buddies a nuisance. I never thought I might actually need one. I also should have checked my reserve; something I used to do regularly.

Since that dive I have added six pounds to my belt and, on second dives, I strap six more onto the tanks. In hindsight, I should have passed my safety line through the rail and held it in my hand for a controlled ascent but hindsight is always 20/20.

What I had done right was not panic. I was scared but I took a second to think things through. I trusted in my training and took rational steps to get out of a dangerous situation.

Maybe some day I'll see you out there on my favorite shipwreck. I'll be the guy with the twin 120s.

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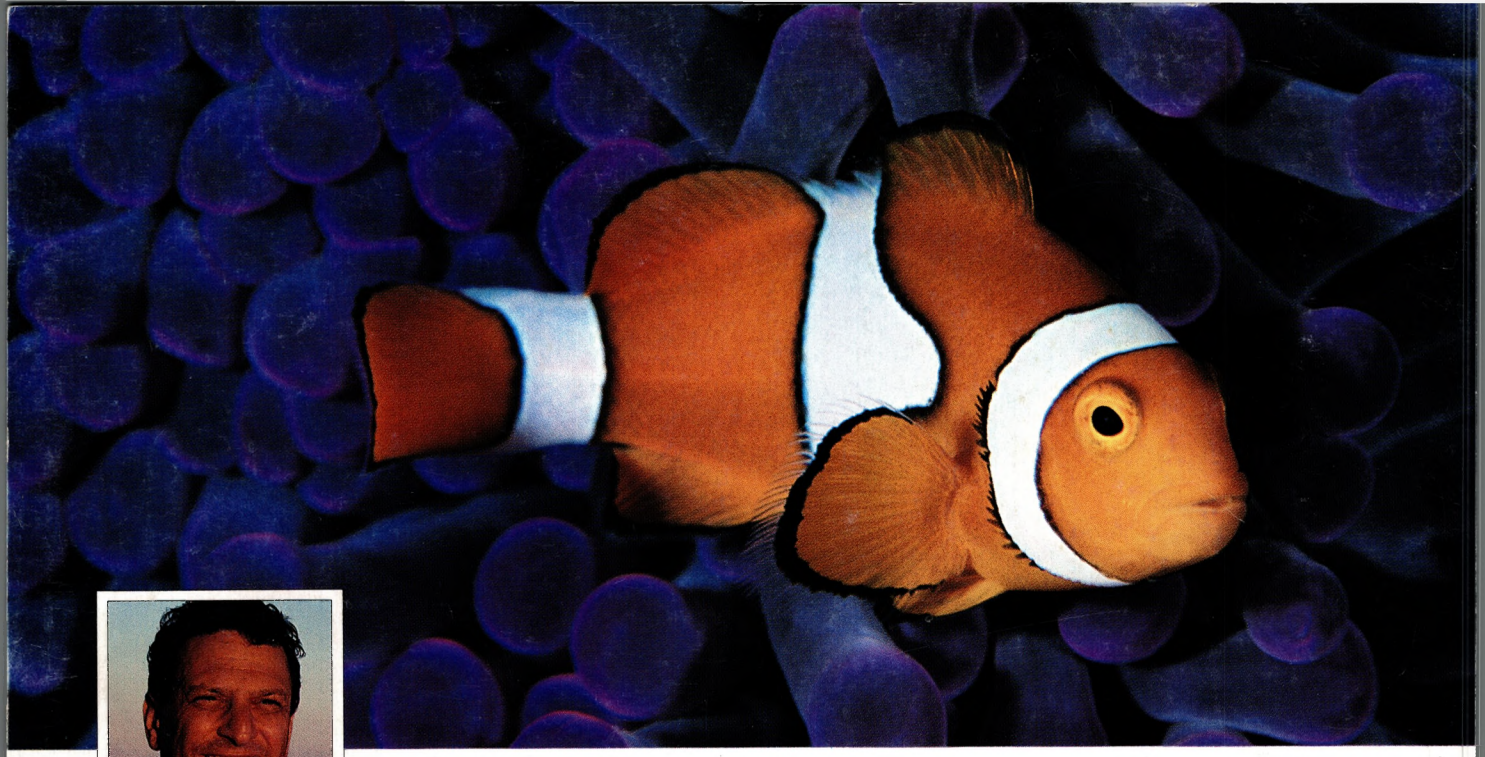

"To an underwater photographer, time is even more precious than light." *David Doubilet*

For nearly two decades, David Doubilet has been recognized as one of the world's most artistically ambitious underwater photographers. As elegantly composed as they are painstakingly lit, David's photographs possess the intimacy and detail of great portraiture.

He says, "I look underwater for the same basic elements that a surface photographer does—light, color, motion, and gesture—and no place on earth offers a more subtle variety of those elements than does the sea."

To achieve his singular effects, he and his assistants submerge themselves for hours at a stretch, taking with them as many as ten complete camera systems, spare SCUBA tanks, and computers to carefully monitor their dives.

Yet, of all his equipment, David has come to trust the reliability of his Rolex Submariner most of all. "Underwater," Doubilet says, "your health depends on proper timing. I would never dive without my Rolex."

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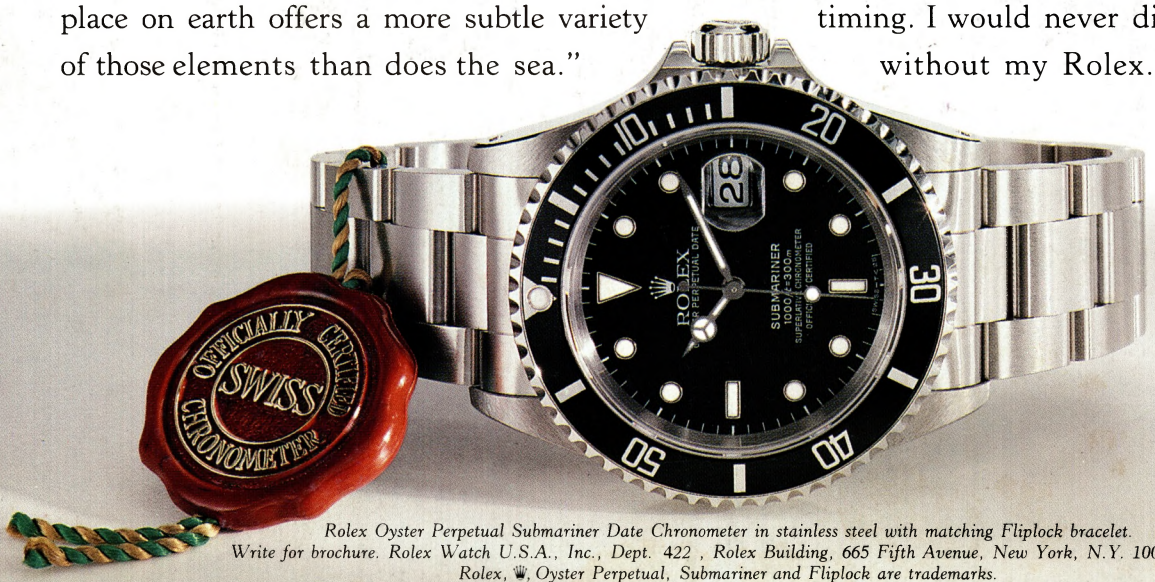

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